POEMS

BY

MRS. BROWNING.

POEMS

BY

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

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CORRECTED BY THE AUTHOR.

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POEMS.

THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN.

"Φεῦ, Φεῦ, τι πρασδερκεσθε μ' ομμασιν, τεκνα."
MEDEA.

I.

Do ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers,
Ere the sorrow comes with years?
They are leaning their young heads against their mothers,
And *that* cannot stop their tears.
The young lambs are bleating in the meadows,
The young birds are chirping in the nest,
The young fawns are playing with the shadows,
The young flowers are blowing toward the west—
But the young, young children, O my brothers,
They are weeping bitterly!
They are weeping in the playtime of the others,
In the country of the free.

II.

Do you question the young children in the sorrow,
Why their tears are falling so?
The old man may weep for his to-morrow
Which is lost in Long Ago.
The old tree is leafless in the forest,
The old year is ending in the frost,
The old wound, if stricken, is the sorest,
The old hope is hardest to be lost.

But the young, young children, O my brothers,
Do you ask them why they stand
Weeping sore before the bosoms of their mothers,
In our happy Fatherland?

III.

They look up with their pale and sunken faces.
And their looks are sad to see,
For the man's hoary anguish draws and presses
Down the cheeks of infancy.
'Your old earth,' they say, 'is very dreary;
Our young feet,' they say, 'are very weak!
Few paces have we taken, yet are weary—
Our grave-rest is very far to seek.
Ask the aged why they weep, and not the children;
For the outside earth is cold;
And we young ones stand without, in our bewildering,
And the graves are for the old.

IV.

'True,' say the children, 'it may happen
That we die before our time.
Little Alice died last year—her grave is shapen
Like a snowball, in the rime.
We looked into the pit prepared to take her.
Was no room for any work in the close clay!
From the sleep wherein she lieth none will wake her,
Crying, 'Get up, little Alice! it is day.'
If you listen by that grave, in sun and shower,
With your ear down, little Alice never cries.
Could we see her face, be sure we should not know her,
For the smile has time for growing in her eyes.

And merry go her moments, lulled and stilled in
The shroud by the kirk-chime!
It is good when it happens,' say the children,
'That we die before our time.'

V.

Alas, alas, the children! they are seeking
Death in life, as best to have.
They are binding up their hearts away from breaking,
With a cerement from the grave.
Go out, children, from the mine and from the city,
Sing out, children, as the little thrushes do.
Pluck your handfuls of the meadow-cowslips pretty,
Laugh aloud, to feel your fingers let them through!
But they answer, 'Are your cowslips of the meadows
Like our weeds anear the mine?
Leave us quiet in the dark of the coal-shadows,
From your pleasures fair and fine!

VI.

'For oh,' say the children, 'we are weary
And we cannot run or leap.
If we cared for any meadows, it were merely
To drop down in them and sleep.
Our knees tremble sorely in the stooping,
We fall upon our faces, trying to go;
And, underneath our heavy eyelids drooping,
The reddest flower would look as pale as snow.
For, all day, we drag our burden tiring
Through the coal-dark, underground—
Or, all day, we drive the wheels of iron
In the factories, round and round.

VII.

'For, all day, the wheels are droning, turning,—
Their wind comes in our faces,—
Till our hearts turn,—our head, with pulses burning,
And the walls turn in their places.
Turns the sky in the high window blank and reeling.
Turns the long light that drops adown the wall,
Turn the black flies that crawl along the ceiling.
All are turning, all the day, and we with all.
And all day, the iron wheels are droning,
And sometimes we could pray,
'O ye wheels,' (breaking out in a mad moaning)
'Stop! be silent for to-day!'"

VIII.

Ay! be silent! Let them hear each other breathing
For a moment, mouth to mouth!
Let them touch each other's hands in a fresh wreathing
Of their tender human youth!
Let them feel that this cold metallic motion
Is not all the life God fashions or reveals.
Let them prove their living souls against the notion
That they live in you, or under you, O wheels!—
Still, all day, the iron wheels go onward,
Grinding life down from its mark;
And the children's souls, which God is calling sunward,
Spin on blindly in the dark.

IX.

Now tell the poor young children, O my brothers,
To look up to Him and pray;
So the blessèd One who blesseth all the others,
Will bless them another day.

They answer, 'Who is God that He should hear us,
While the rushing of the iron wheel is stirred?
When we sob aloud, the human creatures near us,
Pass by, hearing not, or answer not a word.
And *we* hear not (for the wheels in their resounding)
Strangers speaking at the door.
Is it likely God, with angels singing round him,
Hears our weeping any more?

X.

'Two words, indeed, of praying we remember,
And at midnight's hour of harm,
'Our Father,' looking upward in the chamber,
We say softly for a charm.*
We know no other words, except 'Our Father,'
And we think that, in some pause of angels' song,
God may pluck them with the silence sweet to gather,
And hold both within his right hand which is strong.
'Our Father!' If He heard us, He would surely
(For they call him good and mild)
Answer, smiling down the steep world very purely,
'Come and rest with me, my child.'

XI.

'But no!' say the children, weeping faster,
'He is speechless as a stone.
And they tell us, of His image is the master
Who commands us to work on.

* A fact rendered pathetically historical by Mr. Horne's report of his commission. The name of the poet of "Orion" and "Cosmo de' Medici" has, however, a change of associations, and comes in time to remind me that we have some noble poetic heat of literature still,—however open to the reproach of being somewhat gelid in our humanity.—1844.

Go to!' say the children,—'up in Heaven,
Dark, wheel-like, turning clouds are all we find.
Do not mock us; grief has made us unbelieving—
We look up for God, but tears have made us blind.'
Do you hear the children weeping and disproving,
O my brothers, what ye preach?
For God's possible is taught by his world's loving,
And the children doubt of each.

XII.

And well may the children weep before you!
They are weary ere they run.
They have never seen the sunshine, nor the glory,
Which is brighter than the sun.
They know the grief of man, without his wisdom.
They sink in man's despair, without its calm;
Are slaves, without the liberty in Christdom,
Are martyrs, by the pang without the palm,
Are worn, as if with age, yet unretrievingly
The harvest of its memories cannot reap,—
Are orphans of the earthly love and heavenly.
Let them weep! let them weep!

XIII.

They look up, with their pale and sunken faces,
And their look is dread to see,
For they mind you of their angels in high places,
With eyes turned on Deity!—
'How long,' they say, 'how long, O cruel nation,
Will you stand, to move the world, on a child's heart,—
Stifle down with a mailed heel its palpitation,
And tread onward to your throne amid the mart?

Our blood splashes upward, O gold-heaper,
And your purple shows your path!
But the child's sob in the silence curses deeper
Than the strong man in his wrath.'

A CHILD ASLEEP.

I.

How he sleepeth, having drunken
Weary childhood's mandragore!
From his pretty eyes have sunken
Pleasures to make room for more—
Sleeping near the withered nosegay which he pulled the day before.

II.

Nosegays! leave them for the waking.
Throw them earthward where they grew.
Dim are such, beside the breaking
Amaranths he looks unto.
Folded eyes see brighter colours than the open ever do.

III.

Heaven-flowers, rayed by shadows golden
From the palms they sprang beneath,
Now perhaps divinely holden,
Swing against him in a wreath.
We may think so from the quickening of his bloom and of his breath.

IV.

Vision unto vision calleth,
While the young child dreameth on.
Fair, O dreamer, thee befalleth
With the glory thou hast won!
Darker wert thou in the garden, yestermorn by summer sun.

V.

We should see the spirits ringing
Round thee,—were the clouds away.
'Tis the child-heart draws them, singing
In the silent-seeming clay.
Singing!—stars that seem the mutest, go in music all the way.

VI.

As the moths around a taper,
As the bees around a rose,
As the gnats around a vapour,
So the spirits group and close
Round about a holy childhood, as if drinking its repose.

VII.

Shapes of brightness overlean thee,
Flash their diadems of youth
On the ringlets which half screen thee,
While thou smilest . . not in sooth
Thy smile, but the overfair one, dropt from some æthereal mouth.

VIII.

Haply it is angels' duty,
During slumber, shade by shade
To fine down this childish beauty
To the thing it must be made,
Ere the world shall bring it praises, or the tomb shall see it fade

IX.

Softly, softly! make no noises!
Now he lieth dead and dumb.
Now he hears the angels' voices
Folding silence in the room.
Now he muses deep the meaning of the Heaven-words as they come.

X.

Speak not! he is consecrated.
Breathe no breath across his eyes.
Lifted up and separated
On the hand of God he lies,
In a sweetness beyond touching,—held in cloistral sanctities.

XI.

Could ye bless him—father—mother,
Bless the dimple in his cheek?
Dare ye look at one another,
And the benediction speak?
Would ye not break out in weeping, and confess yourselves too weak?

XII.

He is harmless—ye are sinful.
Ye are troubled—he, at ease.
From his slumber, virtue winful
Floweth outward with increase.
Dare not bless him! but be blessed by his peace—
and go in peace.

THE FOURFOLD ASPECT.

I.

When ye stood up in the house
With your little childish feet,
And, in touching Life's first shows,
First the touch of Love did meet,—
Love and Nearness seeming one,
By the heartlight cast before,
And, of all Beloveds, none
Standing farther than the door!
Not a name being dear to thought,
With its owner beyond call;
Nor a face, unless it brought
Its own shadow to the wall;
When the worst recorded change
Was of apple dropt from bough,
When love's sorrow seemed more strange
Than love's treason can seem now,—
Then, the Loving took you up
Soft, upon their elder knees,—

Telling why the statues droop
Underneath the churchyard trees,
And how ye must lie beneath them
Through the winters long and deep,
Till the last trump overbreathe them,
And ye smile out of your sleep . . .
Oh ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if they said
A tale of fairy ships
With a swan-wing for a sail!—
Oh, ye kissed their loving lips
For the merry, merry tale!—
So carelessly ye thought upon the Dead.

II.

Soon ye read in solemn stories
Of the men of long ago—
Of the pale bewildering glories
Shining farther than we know.
Of the heroes with the laurel,
Of the poets with the bay,
Of the two worlds' earnest quarrel
For that beauteous Helena.
How Achilles at the portal
Of the tent, heard footsteps nigh,
And his strong heart, half-immortal,
Met the *keitai* with a cry.
How Ulysses left the sunlight
For the pale eidola race
Blank and passive through the dun light,
Staring blindly in his face.
How that true wife said to Pœtus,
With calm smile and wounded heart,

'Sweet, it hurts not!'—how Admetus
Saw his blessed one depart.
How King Arthur proved his mission,
And Sir Roland wound his horn,
And at Sangreal's moony vision
Swords did bristle round like corn.
Oh, ye lifted up your head, and it seemed the while ye read,
That this Death, then, must be found
A Valhalla for the crowned,
The heroic who prevail.
None, be sure, can enter in
Far below a paladin
Of a noble, noble tale!—
So awfully ye thought upon the Dead.

III.

Ay, but soon ye woke up shrieking,—
As a child that wakes at night
From a dream of sisters speaking
In a garden's summer-light,—
That wakes, starting up and bounding,
In a lonely, lonely bed,
With a wall of darkness round him,
Stifling black about his head!—
And the full sense of your mortal
Rushed upon you deep and loud,
And ye heard the thunder hurtle
From the silence of the cloud!
Funeral-torches at your gateway
Threw a dreadful light within.
All things changed! you rose up straightway
And saluted Death and Sin.

Since,—your outward man has rallied,
And your eye and voice grown bold—
Yet the Sphinx of Life stands pallid,
With her saddest secret told,
Happy places have grown holy.
If ye went where once ye went,
Only tears would fall down slowly,
As at solemn sacrament.
Merry books, once read for pastime,
If ye dared to read again,
Only memories of the last time
Would swim darkly up the brain.
Household names, which used to flutter
Through your laughter unawares,—
God's divinest ye could utter
With less trembling in your prayers!
Ye have dropt adown your head, and it seems as if ye tread
On your own hearts in the path
Ye are called to in His wrath,—
And your prayers go up in wail!
—'Dost Thou see, then, all our loss,
O Thou agonised on cross?
Art thou reading all its tale?'
So mournfully ye think upon the Dead.

IV.

Pray, pray, thou who also weepest,
And the drops will slacken so.
Weep, weep,—and the watch thou keepest,
With a quicker count will go.
Think,—the shadow on the dial
For the nature most undone,

Marks the passing of the trial,
Proves the presence of the sun.
Look, look up, in starry passion,
To the throne above the spheres!
Learn,—the spirit's gravitation
Still must differ from the tear's.
Hope,—with all the strength thou usest
In embracing thy despair.
Love,—the earthly love thou losest
Shall return to thee more fair.
Work,—make clear the forest-tangles
Of the wildest stranger-land.
Trust,—the blessëd deathly angels
Whisper, 'Sabbath hours at hand!'
By the heart's wound when most gory,
By the longest agony,
Smile!—Behold, in sudden glory
The TRANSFIGURED smiles on *thee!*
And ye lifted up your head, and it seemed as if He said,
'My Belovëd, is it so?
Have ye tasted of my woe?
Of my Heaven ye shall not fail!'—
He stands brightly where the shade is,
With the keys of Death and Hades,
And there ends the mournful tale.—
So hopefully ye think upon the Dead.

NIGHT AND THE MERRY MAN.

NIGHT.

'Neath my moon what doest thou,
With a somewhat paler brow
Than she giveth to the ocean?
He, without a pulse or motion,
Muttering low before her stands,
Lifting his invoking hands,
Like a seer before a sprite,
To catch her oracles of light.
But thy soul out-trembles now
Many pulses on thy brow!
Where be all thy laughters clear,
Others laughed alone to hear?
Where, thy quaint jests, said for fame?
Where, thy dances, mixed with game?
Where, thy festive companies,
Moonèd o'er with ladies' eyes.
All more bright for thee, I trow?
'Neath my moon, what doest thou?

THE MERRY MAN.

I am digging my warm heart,
Till I find its coldest part.
I am digging wide and low,
Further than a spade will go;
Till that, when the pit is deep
And large enough, I there may heap

All my present pain and past
Joy, dead things that look aghast
By the daylight.—Now 'tis done.
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Memories—of fancy's golden
Treasures which my hands have holden,
Till the chillness made them ache.
Of childhood's hopes, that used to wake
If birds were in a singing strain,
And for less cause, sleep again.
Of the moss seat in the wood,
Where I trysted solitude.
Of the hill-top, where the wind
Used to follow me behind,
Then in sudden rush to blind
Both my glad eyes with my hair,
Taken gladly in the snare.
Of the climbing up the rocks,—
Of the playing 'neath the oaks,
Which retain beneath them now
Only shadow of the bough.
Of the lying on the grass
While the clouds did overpass,
Only they, so lightly driven,
Seeming betwixt me and Heaven!
Of the little prayers serene,
Murmuring of earth and sin.
Of large-leaved philosophy
Leaning from my childish knee.
Of poetic book sublime,
Soul-kissed for the first dear time,—
Greek or English,—ere I knew

Life was not a poem too.
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

Of the glorious ambitions,
Yet unquenched by their fruitions.
Of the reading out the nights.
Of the straining at mad heights.
Of achievements, less descried
By a dear few, than magnified.
Of praises, from the many earned,
When praise from love was undiscerned.
Of the sweet reflecting gladness,
Softened by itself to sadness.—
Throw them in, by one and one!
I must laugh, at rising sun.

What are these? more, more than these!
Throw in, dearer memories!—
Of voices—whereof but to speak,
Makes mine own all sunk and weak.
Of smiles, the thought of which is sweeping
All my soul to floods of weeping.
Of looks, whose absence fain would weigh
My looks to the ground for aye.
Of clasping hands—ah me! I wring
Mine, and in a tremble fling
Downward, downward, all this paining!
Partings, with the sting remaining.
Meetings, with a deeper throe,
Since the joy is ruined so.
Changes, with a fiery burning—
(Shadows upon all the turning.)

Thoughts of—with a storm they came—
Them, I have not breath to name.
Downward, downward, be they cast
In the pit! and now at last
My work beneath the moon is done,
And I shall laugh, at rising sun.

But let me pause or ere I cover
All my treasures darkly over.
I will speak not in thine ears,
Only tell my beaded tears
Silently, most silently!
When the last is calmly told,
Let that same moist rosary,
With the rest sepulchred be.
Finished now. The darksome mould
Sealeth up the darksome pit.
I will lay no stone on it:
Grasses I will sow instead,
Fit for Queen Titania's tread;
Flowers, encoloured with the sun,
And *a a* written upon none.
Thus, whenever, saileth by
The Lady World of dainty eye,
Not a grief shall here remain,
Silken shoon to damp or stain;
And while she lisps, 'I have not seen
Any place more smooth and clean' . .
Here she cometh!—Ha, ha!—who
Laughs as loud as I can do?

EARTH AND HER PRAISERS.

I.

The Earth is old.
Six thousand winters make her heart a-cold.
The sceptre slanteth from her palsied hold.
She saith, "'Las me!—God's word that I was 'good'
Is taken back to heaven,
From whence when any sound comes, I am riven
By some sharp bolt. And now no angel would
Descend with sweet dew-silence on my mountains,
To glorify the lovely river-fountains
That gush along their side.
I see, O weary change! I see instead
This human wrath and pride,
These thrones, and tombs, judicial wrong, and blood;
And bitter words are poured upon mine head—
'O Earth! thou art a stage for tricks unholy,
A church for most remorseful melancholy!
Thou art so spoilt, we should forget we had
An Eden in thee,—wert thou not so sad.'
Sweet children, I am old! ye, every one,
Do keep me from a portion of my sun,
Give praise in change for brightness!
That I may shake my hills in infiniteness
Of breezy laughter, as in youthful mirth
To hear Earth's sons and daughters praising Earth.'

II.

Whereupon a child began,
With spirit running up to man,

As by angel's shining ladder,
(May he find no cloud above!)
Seeming he had ne'er been sadder
All his days than now,—
Sitting in the chestnut grove,
With that joyous overflow
Of smiling from his mouth, o'er brow
And cheek and chin, as if the breeze
Leaning tricksy from the trees
To part his golden hairs, had blown
Into an hundred smiles that one.

III.

'O rare, rare Earth!' he saith,
'I will praise thee presently;
Not to-day; I have no breath!
I have hunted squirrels three—
Two ran down in the furzy hollow,
Where I could not see nor follow.
One sits at the top of the filbert-tree,
With a yellow nut, and a mock at me.
Presently it shall be done,
When I see which way those two have run,
When the mocking one at the filbert-top
Shall leap a-down, and beside me stop;
Then, rare Earth, rare Earth,
Will I pause, having known thy worth,
To say all good of thee!'

IV.

Next a lover, with a dream
'Neath his waking eyelids hidden,
And a frequent sigh unbidden,
And an idlesse all the day

Beside a wandering stream,
And a silence that is made
Of a word he dares not say,—
Shakes slow his pensive head.
'Earth, Earth!' saith he,
'If spirits, like thy roses, grew
On one stalk, and winds austere
Could but only blow them near,
To share each other's dew!
If, when summer rains agree
To beautify thy hills, I knew
Looking off them I might see
Some one very beauteous too,—
Then Earth,' saith he,
'I would praise . . . nay, nay—not *thee*.

V.

Will the pedant name her next?
Crabbéd with a crabbéd text,
Sits he in his study nook,
With his elbow on a book,
And with stately crossëd knees,
And a wrinkle deeply thrid
Through his lowering brow,
Caused by making proofs enow
That Plato in 'Parmenides'
Meant the same Spinosa did,—
Or, that an hundred of the groping
Like himself, had made one Homer,
Homeros being a misnomer.
What hath *he* to do with praise
Of Earth, or aught? Whene'er the sloping
Sunbeams through his window daze
His eyes off from the learned phrase,

Straightway he draws close the curtain.
May abstraction keep him dumb!
Were his lips to ope, 'tis certain
'Derivatum est' would come.

VI.

Then a mourner moveth pale
In a silence full of wail,
Raising not his sunken head,
Because he wandered last that way
With that One beneath the clay.
Weeping not, because that one,
The only one who would have said,
'Cease to weep, beloved!' has gone
Whence returned comfort none,
The silence breaketh suddenly,—
'Earth, I praise thee!' crieth he,
'Thou hast a grave for also *me*.'

VII.

Ha, a poet! know him by
The ecstasy-dilated eye,
Not uncharged with tears that ran
Upward from his heart of man;
By the cheek, from hour to hour,
Kindled bright or sunken wan
With a sense of lonely power;
By the brow uplifted higher
Than others, for more low declining
By the lip which words of fire
Overboiling have burned white,
While they gave the nations light!
Ay, in every time and place
Ye may know the poet's face
By the shade, or shining.

VIII.

'Neath a golden cloud he stands,
Spreading his impassioned hands.
'O God's Earth!' he saith, 'the sign
From the Father-soul to mine
Of all beauteous mysteries,
Of all perfect images
Which, divine in His divine,
In my human only are
Very excellent and fair!—
Think not, Earth, that I would raise
Weary forehead in thy praise,
(Weary, that I cannot go
Farther from thy region low,)
If were struck no richer meanings
From thee than thyself. The leanings
Of the close trees o'er the brim
Of a sunshine-haunted stream,
Have a sound beneath their leaves,
  Not of wind, not of wind,
Which the poet's voice achieves.
The faint mountains, heaped behind,
Have a falling on their tops,
  Not of dew, not of dew,
Which the poet's fancy drops.
Viewless things his eyes can view.
Driftings of his dream do light
All the skies by day and night.
And the seas that deepest roll,
Carry murmurs of his soul.
Earth, I praise thee! praise thou *me!*
God perfecteth his creation
With this recipient poet-passion,
And makes the beautiful to be.

I praise thee, O belovèd sign,
From the God-soul unto mine!
Praise me, that I cast on thee
The cunning sweet interpretation,
The help and glory and dilation
Of mine immortality!'

IX.

There was silence. None did dare
To use again the spoken air
Of that far-charming voice, until
A Christian resting on the hill,
With a thoughtful smile subdued
(Seeming learnt in solitude)
Which a weeper might have viewed
Without new tears, did softly say,
And looked up unto heaven alway
While he praised the Earth—
'O Earth,
I count the praises thou art worth,
By thy waves that move aloud,
By thy hills against the cloud,
By thy valleys warm and green,
By the copses' elms between,
By their birds which, like a sprite
Scattered by a strong delight
Into fragments musical,
Stir and sing in every bush;
By thy silver founts that fall,
As if to entice the stars at night
To thine heart; by grass and rush,
And little weeds the children pull,
Mistook for flowers!
—Oh, beautiful

Art thou, Earth, albeit worse
Than in heaven is callèd good!
Good to us, that we may know
Meekly from thy good to go;
While the holy, crying Blood
Puts its music kind and low,
'Twixt such ears as are not dull,
And thine ancient curse!

X.

'Praisèd be the mosses soft
In thy forest pathways oft,
And the thorns, which make us think
Of the thornless river-brink,
Where the ransomed tread.
Praisèd be thy sunny gleams,
And the storm, that worketh dreams
Of calm unfinishèd.
Praisèd be thine active days,
And thy night-time's solemn need,
When in God's dear book we read
No night shall be therein.
Praisèd be thy dwellings warm
By household faggot's cheerful blaze,
Where, to hear of pardoned sin,
Pauseth oft the merry din,
Save the babe's upon the arm,
Who croweth to the crackling wood.
Yea,—and better understood,
Praisèd be thy dwellings cold,
Hid beneath the churchyard mould,
Where the bodies of the saints,
Separate from earthly taints,

Lie asleep, in blessing bound,
Waiting for the trumpet's sound
To free them into blessing;—none
Weeping more beneath the sun,
Though dangerous words of human love
Be graven very near, above.

XI.

'Earth, we Christians praise thee thus,
Even for the change that comes,
With a grief, from thee to us!
For thy cradles and thy tombs,
For the pleasant corn and wine,
And summer-heat; and also for
The frost upon the sycamore,
And hail upon the vine!'

THE VIRGIN MARY TO THE CHILD JESUS.

But see the Virgin blest
Hath laid her babe to rest.
MILTON'S *Hymn on the Nativity.*

I.

SLEEP, sleep, mine Holy One!
My flesh, my Lord!—what name? I do not know
A name that seemeth not too high or low,
Too far from me or heaven.
My Jesus, *that* is best! that word being given
By the majestic angel whose command

Was softly as a man's beseeching said,
When I and all the earth appeared to stand
In the great overflow
Of light celestial from his wings and head.
Sleep, sleep, my saving One!

II.

And art thou come for saving, baby-browed
And speechless Being—art thou come for saving?
The palm that grows beside our door is bowed
By treadings of the low wind from the south,
A restless shadow through the chamber waving:
Upon its bough a bird sings in the sun;
But Thou, with that close slumber on thy mouth,
Dost seem of wind and sun already weary.
Art come for saving, O my weary One?

III.

Perchance this sleep that shutteth out the dreary
Earth-sounds and motions, opens on Thy soul
High dreams on fire with God;
High songs that make the pathways where they roll
More bright than stars do theirs; and visions new
Of Thine eternal Nature's old abode.
Suffer this mother's kiss,
Best thing that earthly is,
To glide the music and the glory through,
Nor narrow in thy dream the broad upliftings
Of any seraph wing.
Thus noiseless, thus. Sleep, sleep, my dreaming One!

IV.

The slumber of His lips meseems to run
Through *my* lips to mine heart,—to all its shiftings

Of sensual life, bringing contrariousness
In a great calm. I feel, I could lie down
As Moses did, and die,*—and then live most.
I am 'ware of you, heavenly Presences,
That stand with your peculiar light unlost,
Each forehead with a high thought for a crown,
Unsunned i' the sunshine! I am 'ware. Ye throw
No shade against the wall! How motionless
Ye round me with your living statuary,
While through your whiteness, in and outwardly,
Continual thoughts of God appear to go,
Like light's soul in itself. I bear, I bear,
To look upon the dropt lids of your eyes,
Though their external shining testifies
To that beatitude within, which were
Enough to blast an eagle at his sun.
I fall not on my sad clay face before ye,—
I look on His. I know
My spirit which dilateth with the woe
Of His mortality,
May well contain your glory.
Yea, drop your lids more low.
Ye are but fellow-worshippers with me!
Sleep, sleep, my worshipped One!

V.

We sate among the stalls at Bethlehem.
The dumb kine from their fodder turning them,
Softened their hornèd faces
To almost human gazes
Toward the newly Born.
The simple shepherds from the star-lit brooks

* It is a Jewish tradition that Moses died of the kisses of God's lips.

Brought visionary looks,
As yet in their astonied hearing rung
The strange, sweet angel-tongue.
The magi of the East, in sandals worn,
Knelt reverent, sweeping round,
With long pale beards, their gifts upon the ground,
The incense, myrrh and gold
These baby hands were impotent to hold.
So, let all earthlies and celestials wait
Upon thy royal state.
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VI.

I am not proud—meek angels, ye invest
New meeknesses to hear such utterance rest
On mortal lips,—'I am not proud'—*not proud!*
Albeit in my flesh God sent his Son,
Albeit over Him my head is bowed
As others bow before Him, still mine heart
Bows lower than their knees. O centuries
That roll, in vision, your futurities
My future grave athwart,—
Whose murmurs seem to reach me while I keep
Watch o'er this sleep,—
Say of me as the Heavenly said—'Thou art
The blessedest of women!'—blessedest,
Not holiest, not noblest—no high name,
Whose height misplaced may pierce me like a shame,
When I sit meek in heaven!
For me, for me
God knows that I am feeble like the rest!—
I often wandered forth, more child than maiden,
Among the midnight hills of Galilee
Whose summits looked heaven-laden,

Listening to silence as it seemed to be
God's voice, so soft yet strong—so fain to press
Upon my heart as Heaven did on the height,
And waken up its shadows by a light,
And show its vileness by a holiness.
Then I knelt down most silent like the night,
Too self-renounced for fears,
Raising my small face to the boundless blue
Whose stars did mix and tremble in my tears.
God heard *them* falling after—with his dew.

VII.

So, seeing my corruption, can I see
This Incorruptible now born of me,
This fair new Innocence no sun did chance
To shine on, (for even Adam was no child)
Created from my nature all defiled,
This mystery, from out mine ignorance,—
Nor feel the blindness, stain, corruption, more
Than others do, or *I* did heretofore?—
Can hands wherein such burden pure has been,
Not open with the cry 'unclean, unclean,'
More oft than any else beneath the skies?
Ah King, ah Christ, ah son!
The kine, the shepherds, the abasèd wise,
Must all less lowly wait
Than I, upon thy state.—
Sleep, sleep, my kingly One!

VIII.

Art Thou a King, then? Come, his universe,
Come, crown me Him a King!
Pluck rays from all such stars as never fling
Their light where fell a curse,

And make a crowning for this kingly brow!—
What is my word?—Each empyreal star
Sits in a sphere afar
In shining ambuscade.
The child-brow, crowned by none,
Keeps its unchildlike shade.
Sleep, sleep, my crownless One!

IX.

Unchildlike shade!—No other babe doth wear
An aspect very sorrowful, as thou.—
No small babe-smiles, my watching heart has seen,
To float like speech the speechless lips between.
No dovelike cooing in the golden air,
No quick short joys of leaping babyhood.
Alas, our earthly good
In heaven thought evil, seems too good for Thee:
Yet, sleep, my weary One!

X.

And then the drear sharp tongue of prophecy,
With the dread sense of things which shall be done,
Doth smite me inly, like a sword! a sword?—
(*That* 'smites the Shepherd.') Then, I think aloud
The words 'despised,'—'rejected,'—every word
Recoiling into darkness as I view
The Darling on my knee.
Bright angels,—move not!—lest ye stir the cloud
Betwixt my soul and His futurity!
I must not die, with mother's work to do,
And could not live—and see.

XI.

It is enough to bear
This image still and fair—

This holier in sleep,
Than a saint at prayer:
This aspect of a child
Who never sinned or smiled;
This Presence in an infant's face;
This sadness most like love,
This love than love more deep,
This weakness like omnipotence
It is so strong to move.
Awful is this watching place,
Awful what I see from hence—
A king, without regalia,
A God, without the thunder,
A child, without the heart for play;
Ay, a Creator, rent asunder
From his first glory and cast away
On His own world, for me alone
To hold in hands created, crying—Son!

XII.

That tear fell not on thee,
Beloved, yet thou stirrest in thy slumber!
Thou, stirring not for glad sounds out of number
Which through the vibratory palm-trees run
From summer wind and bird,
So quickly hast thou heard
A tear fall silently?—
Wak'st thou, O loving One?—

AN ISLAND.

All goeth but Goddis will.—Old Poet.

I.

My dream is of an island place
  Which distant seas keep lonely,
A little island, on whose face
  The stars are watchers only.
Those bright still stars! they need not seem
Brighter or stiller in my dream.

II.

An island full of hills and dells,
  All rumpled and uneven
With green recesses, sudden swells,
  And odorous valleys driven
So deep and straight, that always there
The wind is cradled to soft air.

III.

Hills running up to heaven for light
  Through woods that half-way ran!
As if the wild earth mimicked right
  The wilder heart of man.
Only it shall be greener far
And gladder than hearts ever are.

IV.

More like, perhaps, that mountain piece
  Of Dante's paradise,
Disrupt to an hundred hills like these,
  In falling from the skies;

Bringing within it, all the roots
Of heavenly trees and flowers and fruits.

V.

For saving where the grey rocks strike
Their javelins up the azure,
Or where deep fissures, miser-like,
Hoard up some fountain treasure,
(And e'en in them—stoop down and hear—
Leaf sounds with water in your ear!)

VI.

The place is all awave with trees,
Limes, myrtles purple-beaded,
Acacias having drunk the lees
Of the night-dew, faint-headed,
And wan, grey olive-woods, which seem
The fittest foliage for a dream.

VII.

Trees, trees on all sides! they combine
Their plumy shades to throw;
Through whose clear fruit and blossom fine
Whene'er the sun may go,
The ground beneath he deeply stains,
As passing through cathedral-panes.

VIII.

But little needs this earth of ours
That shining from above her,
When many Pleiades of flowers
(Not one lost) star her over,
The rays of their unnumbered hues
Being all refracted by the dews.

IX.

Wide-petalled plants, that boldly drink
The Amreeta of the shy;
Shut bells, that dull with rapture sink;
And lolling buds, half shy.
I cannot count them, but between,
Is room for grass and mosses green,

X.

And brooks, that glass in different strengths
All colours in disorder,
Or gathering up their silver lengths
Beside their winding border
Sleep, haunted through the slumber hidden,
By lilies white as dreams in Eden.

XI.

Nor think each archèd tree with each
Too closely interlaces,
To admit of vistas out of reach,
And broad moon-lighted places,
Upon whose sward the antlered deer
May view their double image clear.

XII.

For all this island's creature-full,
(Kept happy not by halves)
Mild cows, that at the vine-wreaths pull,
Then low back at their calves
With tender lowings, to approve
The warm mouths milking them for love.

XIII.

Free gamesome horses, antelopes,
And harmless leaping leopards,
And buffaloes upon the slopes,
And sheep unruled by shepherds.
Hares, lizards, hedgehogs, badgers, mice,
Snakes, squirrels, frogs, and butterflies.

XIV.

And birds that live there in a crowd,
Horned owls, rapt nightingales,
Larks bold with heaven, and peacocks proud,
Self-sphered in those grand tails;
All creatures glad and safe, I deem.
No guns nor springes in my dream!

XV.

The island's edges are a-wing
With trees that overbranch
The sea with song-birds welcoming
The curlews to green change.
And doves from half-closed lids espy
The red and purple fish go by.

XVI.

One dove is answering in trust
The water every minute,
Thinking so soft a murmur must
Have her mate's cooing in it.
So softly doth earth's beauty round
Infuse itself in ocean's sound.

XVII.

My sanguine soul bounds forwarder
To meet the bounding waves.
Beside them straightway I repair,
To live within the caves;
And near me two or three may dwell
Whom dreams fantastic please as well.

XVIII.

Long winding caverns, glittering far
Into a crystal distance!
Through clefts of which, shall many a star
Shine clear without resistance,
And carry down its rays the smell
Of flowers above invisible.

XIX.

I said that two or three might choose
Their dwelling near mine own:
Those who would change man's voice and use,
For Nature's way and tone—
Man's veering heart and careless eyes,
For Nature's stedfast sympathies.

XX.

Ourselves to meet her faithfulness,
Shall play a faithful part:
Her beautiful shall ne'er address
The monstrous at our heart;
Her musical shall ever touch
Something within us also such.

XXI.

Yet shall she not our mistress live,
As doth the moon of ocean,
Though gently as the moon she give
Our thoughts a light and motion:
More like a harp of many lays,
Moving its master while he plays.

XXII.

No sod in all that island doth
Yawn open for the dead.
No wind hath borne a traitor's oath;
No earth a mourner's tread.
We cannot say by stream or shade,
'I suffered *here*,—was *here* betrayed.'

XXIII.

Our only 'farewell' we shall laugh
To shifting cloud or hour,
And use our only epitaph
To some bud turned a flower.
Our only tears shall serve to prove
Excess in pleasure or in love.

XXIV.

Our fancies shall their plumage catch
From fairest island birds,
Whose eggs let young ones out at hatch,
Born singing! then our words
Unconsciously shall take the dyes
Of those prodigious fantasies.

XXV.

Yea, soon, no consonant unsmooth
Our smile-tuned lips shall reach.
Sounds sweet as Hellas spake in youth,
Shall glide into our speech.
(What music, certes, can you find
As soft as voices which are kind?)

XXVI.

And often, by the joy without
And in us overcome,
We, through our musing, shall let float
Such poems,—sitting dumb,—
As Pindar might have writ, if he
Had tended sheep in Arcady;

XXVII.

Or Æschylus—the pleasant fields
He died in, longer knowing;
Or Homer, had men's sins and shields
Been lost in Meles flowing;
Or Poet Plato, had the undim
Unsetting Godlight broke on him.

XXVIII.

Choose me the cave most worthy choice,
To make a place for prayer,
And I will choose a praying voice
To pour our spirits there.
How silverly the echoes run—
Thy will be done,—thy will be done.

XXIX.

Gently yet strangely uttered words!—
They lift me from my dream.
The island fadeth with its swards
That did no more than seem.
The streams are dry, no sun could find—
The fruits are fallen, without wind.

XXX.

So oft the doing of God's will
Our foolish wills undoeth!
And yet what idle dream breaks ill,
Which morning-light subdueth?
And who would murmur and misdoubt,
When God's great sunrise finds him out?

THE SOUL'S TRAVELLING.

Ἤδη νοερους
Πετασαι ταρσους.
SYNESIUS.

I.

DWELL amid the city ever.
The great humanity which beats
Its life along the stony streets,
Like a strong and unsunned river
In a self-made course,
I sit and harken while it rolls.
Very sad and very hoarse

Certes is the flow of souls.
Infinitest tendencies
By the finite prest and pent,
In the finite, turbulent,
How we tremble in surprise,
When sometimes with an awful sound,
God's great plummet strikes the ground!

II.

The champ of the steeds on the silver bit,
As they whirl the rich man's carriage by.
The beggar's whine as he looks at it,—
But it goes too fast for charity.
The trail on the street of the poor man's broom,
That the lady who walks to her palace-home,
On her silken skirt may catch no dust.
The tread of the business-men who must
Count their per-cents by the paces they take.
The cry of the babe unheard of its mother
Though it lie on her breast, while she thinks of
the other
Laid yesterday where it will not wake.
The flower-girl's prayer to buy roses and pinks,
Held out in the smoke, like stars by day.
The gin-door's oath that hollowly chinks
Guilt upon grief and wrong upon hate,
The cabman's cry to get out of the way,
The dustman's call down the area-grate.
The young maid's jest, and the old wife's scold,
The haggling talk of the boys at a stall,
The fight in the street which is backed for gold,
The plea of the lawyers in Westminster Hall.
The drop on the stones of the blind man's staff
As he trades in his own grief's sacredness,

The brothel shriek, and the Newgate laugh.
The hum upon 'Change, and the organ's grinding.
The grinder's face being nevertheless
Dry and vacant of even woe,
While the children's hearts are leaping so
At the merry music's winding.
The black-plumed funeral's creeping train
Long and slow (and yet they will go
As fast as Life though it hurry and strain!)
Creeping the populous houses through
And nodding their plumes at either side,—
At many a house where an infant, new
To the sunshiny world, has just struggled and cried;
At many a house, where sitteth a bride
Trying to-morrow's coronals
With a scarlet blush to-day.
Slowly creep the funerals,
As none should hear the noise and say,
The living, the living, must go away
To multiply the dead.
Hark! an upward shout is sent!
In grave strong joy from tower to steeple
The bells ring out—
The trumpets sound, the people shout,
The young queen goes to her parliament.
She turneth round her large blue eyes
More bright with childish memories
Than royal hopes, upon the people.
On either side she bows her head
Lowly, with a queenly grace,
And smile most trusting-innocent,
As if she smiled upon her mother;
The thousands press before each other
To bless her to her face;

And booms the deep majestic voice
Through trump and drum—'May the queen rejoice
In the people's liberties!'—

III.

I dwell amid the city,
And hear the flow of souls in act and speech,
For pomp or trade, for merrymake or folly.
I hear the confluence and sum of each,
And that is melancholy!—
Thy voice is a complaint, O crownéd city,
The blue sky covering thee like God's great pity.

IV.

O blue sky! it mindeth me
Of places where I used to see
Its vast unbroken circle thrown
From the far pale-peakéd hill
Out to the last verge of ocean,
As by God's arm it were done
Then for the first time, with the emotion
Of that first impulse on it still.
Oh, we spirits fly at will,
Faster than the wingéd steed
Whereof in old book we read,
With the sunlight foaming back
From his flanks to a misty wrack,
And his nostril reddening proud
As he breasteth the steep thundercloud,—
Smoother than Sabrina's chair
Gliding up from wave to air,
While she smileth debonair
Yet holy, coldly and yet brightly,
Like her own mooned waters nightly,
Through her dripping hair.

V.

Very fast and smooth we fly,
Spirits, though the flesh be by.
All looks feed not from the eye,
Nor all hearings from the ear;
  We can harken and espy
Without either; we can journey
Bold and gay as knight to tourney,
And though we wear no visor down
To dark our countenance, the foe
Shall never chafe us as we go.

VI.

I am gone from peopled town!
It passeth its street-thunder round
My body which yet hears no sound.
For now another sound, another
Vision, my soul's senses have—
  O'er a hundred valleys deep,
Where the hills' green shadows sleep,
Scarce known, (because the valley-trees
Cross those upland images)
O'er a hundred hills, each other
Watching to the western wave,
I have travelled,—I have found
The silent, lone, remembered ground.

VII.

I have found a grassy niche
Hollowed in a seaside hill,
As if the ocean-grandeur which
Is aspectable from the place
Had struck the hill as with a mace

Sudden and cleaving. You might fill
That little nook with the little cloud
Which sometimes lieth by the moon
To beautify a night of June.
A cavelike nook, which, opening all
To the wide sea, is disallowed
From its own earth's sweet pastoral;
Cavelike, but roofless overhead,
And made of verdant banks instead
Of any rocks, with flowerets spread,
Instead of spar and stalactite,
Cowslips and daisies, gold and white.
Such pretty flowers on such green sward,
You think the sea they look toward
Doth serve them for another sky
As warm and blue as that on high.

VIII.

And in this hollow is a seat,
And when you shall have crept to it,
Slipping down the banks too steep
To be o'erbrowzëd by the sheep,
Do not think—though at your feet
The cliff's disrupt—you shall behold
The line where earth and ocean meet.
You sit too much above to view
The solemn confluence of the two.
You can hear them as they greet;
You can hear that evermore
Distance-softened noise, more old
Than Nereid's singing,—the tide spent
Joining soft issues with the shore
In harmony of discontent,—
And when you harken to the grave

Lamenting of the underwave,
You must believe in earth's communion,
Albeit you witness not the union.

IX.

Except that sound, the place is full
Of silences, which when you cull
By any word, it thrills you so
That presently you let them grow
To meditation's fullest length
Across your soul with a soul's strength:
And as they touch your soul, they borrow
Both of its grandeur and its sorrow,
That deathly odour which the clay
Leaves on its deathlessness alway.

X.

Alway! alway? must this be?
Rapid Soul from city gone,
Dost thou carry inwardly
What doth make the city's moan?
Must this deep sigh of thine own
Haunt thee with humanity?
Green-visioned banks that are too steep
To be o'erbrowzëd by the sheep,
May all sad thoughts adown you creep
Without a shepherd?—Mighty sea,
Can we dwarf thy magnitude,
And fit it to our straitest mood?—
O fair, fair Nature! are we thus
Impotent and querulous
Among thy workings glorious,
Wealth and sanctities,—that still
Leave us vacant and defiled,

And wailing like a soft-kissed child,
Kissed soft against his will?

XI.

God, God!
With a child's voice I cry,
Weak, sad, confidingly—
God, God!
Thou knowest, eyelids, raised not always up
Unto thy love, (as none of ours are) droop
As ours, o'er many a tear!
Thou knowest, though thy universe is broad,
Two little tears suffice to cover all.
Thou knowest, thou, who art so prodigal
Of beauty, we are oft but stricken deer
Expiring in the woods—that care for none
Of those delightsome flowers they die upon.

XII.

O blissful Mouth which breathed the mournful breath
We name our souls, self-spoilt!—by that strong passion
Which paled thee once with sighs,—by that strong death
Which made thee once unbreathing—from the wrack
Themselves have called around them, call them back
Back to thee in continuous aspiration!
For here, O Lord,
For here they travel vainly,—vainly pass
From city pavement to untrodden sward,
Where the lark finds her deep nest in the grass
Cold with the earth's last dew. Yea, very vain
The greatest speed of all these souls of men,

Unless they travel upward to the throne,
Where sittest Thou the satisfying One,
With help for sins and holy perfectings
For all requirements—while the archangel, raising
Unto thy face his full ecstatic gazing,
Forgets the rush and rapture of his wings.

TO BETTINE,

THE CHILD-FRIEND OF GOETHE.

"I have the second sight, Goethe!"—*Letters of a child.*

I.

Bettine, friend of Goethe,
Hadst thou the second sight—
Upturning worship and delight
With such a loving duty
To his grand face, as women will,
The childhood 'neath thine eyelids still?

II.

Before his shrine to doom thee
Using the same child's smile
That heaven and earth, beheld erewhile
For the first time, won from thee,
Ere star and flower grew dim and dead,
Save at his feet and o'er his head?

III.

Digging thine heart and throwing
Away its childhood's gold,
That so its woman-depth might hold

His spirit's overflowing.
For surging souls, no worlds can bound,
Their channel in the heart have found.

IV.

O child, to change appointed,
Thou hadst not second sight!
What eyes the future view aright,
Unless by tears anointed?
Yea, only tears themselves can show
The burning ones that have to flow.

V.

O woman, deeply loving,
Thou hadst not second sight!
The star is very high and bright,
And none can see it moving.
Love looks around, below, above,
Yet all his prophecy is—love.

VI.

The bird thy childhood's playing
Sent onward o'er the sea,
Thy dove of hope came back to thee
Without a leaf. Art laying
Its wet cold wing no sun can dry,
Still in thy bosom secretly?

VII.

Our Goethe's friend, Bettine,
I have the second sight!
The stone upon his grave is white,
The funeral stone between ye;
And in thy mirror thou hast viewed
Some change as hardly understood.

VIII.

Where's childhood? where is Goethe?
The tears are in thine eyes.
Nay, thou shalt yet reorganise
Thy maidenhood of beauty
In his own glory, which is smooth
Of wrinkles and sublime in youth.

IX.

The poet's arms have wound thee,
He breathes upon thy brow,
He lifts thee upward in the glow
Of his great genius round thee,—
The child-like poet undefiled
Preserving evermore THE CHILD.

MAN AND NATURE.

A SAD man on a summer day
Did look upon the earth and say—

'Purple cloud, the hill-top binding,
Folded hills, the valleys wind in,
Valleys, with fresh streams among you,
Streams, with bosky trees along you,
Trees, with many birds and blossoms,
Birds, with music-trembling bosoms,
Blossoms, dropping dews that wreathe you
To your fellow flowers beneath you,
Flowers, that constellate on earth,
Earth, that shakest to the mirth

Of the merry Titan ocean,
All his shining hair in motion!
Why am I thus the only one
Who can be dark beneath the sun?'

But when the summer day was past,
He looked to heaven and smiled at last,
Self-answered so—
'Because, O cloud,
Pressing with thy crumpled shroud
Heavily on mountain top,—
Hills, that almost seem to drop,
Stricken with a misty death,
To the valleys underneath,—
Valleys, sighing with the torrent,—
Waters, streaked with branches horrent,—
Branchless trees, that shake your head
Wildly o'er your blossoms spread
Where the common flowers are found,—
Flowers, with foreheads to the ground,—
Ground, that shriekest while the sea
With his iron smiteth thee—
I am, besides, the only one
Who can be bright *without* the sun.'

A SEA-SIDE WALK.

I.

We walked beside the sea
After a day which perished silently
Of its own glory—like the princess weird
Who, combating the Genius, scorched and seared
Uttered with burning breath, 'Ho! victory!'
And sank adown an heap of ashes pale.
So runs the Arab tale.

II.

The sky above us showed
A universal and unmoving cloud,
On which the cliffs permitted us to see
Only the outline of their majesty,
As master minds when gazed at by the crowd!
And, shining with a gloom, the water grey
Swang in its moon-taught way.

III.

Nor moon, nor stars were out.
They did not dare to tread so soon about,
Though trembling, in the footsteps of the sun,
The light was neither night's nor day's, but one
Which, life-like, had a beauty in its doubt.
And Silence's impassioned breathings round
Seemed wandering into sound.

IV.

O solemn-beating heart
Of nature! I have knowledge that thou art

Bound unto man's by cords he cannot sever—
And, what time they are slackened by him ever,
So to attest his own supernal part,
Still runneth thy vibration fast and strong
The slackened cord along.

V.

For though we never spoke
Of the grey water and the shaded rock,
Dark wave and stone unconsciously were fused
Into the plaintive speaking that we used
Of absent friends and memories unforsook;
And, had we seen each other's face, we had
Seen haply, each was sad.

THE SEA-MEW.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO M. E. H.

I.

How joyously the young sea-mew
Lay dreaming on the waters blue,
Whereon our little bark had thrown
A little shade, the only one,—
But shadows ever man pursue.

II.

Familiar with the waves and free
As if their own white foam were he,
His heart upon the heart of ocean
Lay learning all its mystic motion,
And throbbing to the throbbing sea.

III.

And such a brightness in his eye,
As if the ocean and the sky
Within him had lit up and nurst
A soul God gave him not at first,
To comprehend their majesty.

IV.

We were not cruel, yet did sunder
His white wing from the blue waves under,
And bound it, while his fearless eyes
Shone up to ours in calm surprise,
As deeming us some ocean wonder!

V.

We bore our ocean bird unto
A grassy place, where he might view
The flowers that curtsey to the bees,
The waving of the tall green trees,
The falling of the silver dew.

VI.

But flowers of earth were pale to him
Who had seen the rainbow fishes swim;
And when earth's dew around him lay
He thought of ocean's wingéd spray,
And his eye waxéd sad and dim.

VII.

The green trees round him only made
A prison with their darksome shade;
And drooped his wing, and mournéd he
For his own boundless glittering sea—
Albeit he knew not they could fade.

VIII.

Then One her gladsome face did bring,
Her gentle voice's murmuring,
In ocean's stead his heart to move
And teach him what was human love—
He thought it a strange, mournful thing.

IX.

He lay down in his grief to die,
(First looking to the sea-like sky
That hath no waves!) because, alas!
Our human touch did on him pass,
And with our touch, our agony.

FELICIA HEMANS.

TO L. E. L., REFERRING TO HER MONODY ON THE POETESS.

I.

Thou bay-crowned living One that o'er the bay-crowned Dead art bowing,
And o'er the shadeless moveless brow the vital shadow throwing,
And o'er the sighless songless lips the wail and music wedding,
And dropping o'er the tranquil eyes, the tears not of their shedding!—

II.

Take music from the silent Dead, whose meaning is completer,
Reserve thy tears for living brows, where all such tears are meeter,

And leave the violets in the grass to brighten where thou treadest!
No flowers for her! no need of flowers—albeit 'bring flowers,' thou saidest.

III.

Yes, flowers, to crown the 'cup and lute!' since both may come to breaking.
Or flowers, to greet the 'bride!' the heart's own beating works its aching.
Or flowers, to soothe the 'captive's' sight, from earth's free bosom gathered,
Reminding of his earthly hope, then withering as it withered.

IV.

But bring not near the solemn corse, a type of human seeming.
Lay only dust's stern verity upon the dust undreaming.
And while the calm perpetual stars shall look upon it solely,
Her spherèd soul shall look on *them*, with eyes more bright and holy.

V.

Nor mourn, O living One, because her part in life was mourning.
Would she have lost the poet's fire for anguish of the burning?
The minstrel harp, for the strained string? the tripod, for the afflated
Woe? or the vision, for those tears in which it shone dilated?

VI.

Perhaps she shuddered while the world's cold hand
her brow was wreathing,
But never wronged that mystic breath which
breathed in all her breathing,
Which drew from rocky earth and man, abstractions
high and moving,
Beauty, if not the beautiful, and love, if not the loving.

VII.

Such visionings have paled in sight; the Saviour
she descrieth,
And little recks *who* wreathed the brow which on
His bosom lieth.
The whiteness of His innocence o'er all her gar-
ments flowing,
There, learneth she the sweet 'new song,' she will
not mourn in knowing.

VIII.

Be happy, crowned and living One! and, as thy
dust decayeth,
May thine own England say for thee, what now for
Her it sayeth—
'Albeit softly in our ears her silver song was ringing,
The foot-fall of her parting soul is softer than her
singing!'

L. E. L.'S LAST QUESTION.

'Do you think of me as I think of you?'
From her poem written during the voyage to the Cape.

I.

'Do you think of me as I think of you,
My friends, my friends?'—She said it from the sea,
The English minstrel in her minstrelsy.
While, under brighter skies than erst she knew,
Her heart grew dark, and groped there, as the blind,
To reach across the waves friends left behind—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

II.

It seemed not much to ask—as *I* of *you?*
We all do ask the same. No eyelids cover
Within the meekest eyes, that question over.
And little in the world the Loving do
But sit (among the rocks?) and listen for
The echo of their own love evermore—
'Do you think of me as I think of you?'

III.

Love-learnèd she had sung of love and love,—
And like a child that, sleeping with dropt head
Upon the fairy-book he lately read,
Whatever household noises round him move,
Hears in his dream some elfin turbulence,—
Even so, suggestive to her inward sense,
All sounds of life assumed one tune of love.

IV.

And when the glory of her dream withdrew,
When knightly gestes and courtly pageantries
Were broken in her visionary eyes
By tears the solemn seas attested true,—
Forgetting that sweet lute beside her hand
She asked not,—Do you praise me, O my land?—
But,—'Think ye of me, friends, as I of you?'

V.

Hers was the hand that played for many a year
Love's silver phrase for England,—smooth and well.
Would God, her heart's more inward oracle
In that lone moment might confirm her dear!
For when her questioned friends in agony
Made passionate response, 'We think of thee,'
Her place was in the dust, too deep to hear.

VI.

Could she not wait to catch their answering breath?
Was she content, content, with ocean's sound,
Which dashed its mocking infinite around
One thirsty for a little love?—beneath
Those stars content, where last her song had gone,—
They mute and cold in radiant life,—as soon
Their singer was to be, in darksome death?*

VII.

Bring your vain answers—cry, 'We think of thee!'
How think ye of her? warm in long ago
Delights?—or crowned with budding bays? Not so.
None smile and none are crowned where lieth she,

* Her lyric on the polar star came home with her latest papers.

With all her visions unfulfilled save one,
Her childhood's—of the palm-trees in the sun—
And lo! their shadow on her sepulchre!

VIII.

'Do ye think of me as I think of you?'—
O friends, O kindred, O dear brotherhood
Of all the world! what are we, that we should
For covenants of long affection sue?
Why press so near each other when the touch
Is barred by graves? Not much, and yet too much,
Is this 'Think of me as I think of you.'

IX.

But while on mortal lips I shape anew
A sigh to mortal issues,—verily
Above the unshaken stars that see us die,
A vocal pathos rolls; and HE who drew
All life from dust, and for all, tasted death,
By death and life and love, appealing, saith,
'*Do you think of me as I think of you?*'

CROWNED AND WEDDED.

I.

When last before her people's face her own fair face she bent,
Within the meek projection of that shade she was content
To erase the child-smile from her lips, which seemed as if it might
Be still kept holy from the world to childhood still in sight—
To erase it with a solemn vow,—a princely vow—to rule;
A priestly vow—to rule by grace of God the pitiful;
A very godlike vow—to rule in right and righteousness,
And with the law and for the land!—so God the vower bless!

II.

The minster was alight that day, but not with fire, I ween,
And long-drawn glitterings swept adown that mighty aisléd scene.
The priests stood stolëd in their pomp, the sworded chiefs in theirs,
And so, the collared knights, and so, the civil ministers,
And so, the waiting lords and dames—and little pages best
At holding trains—and legates so, from countries east and west.

So, alien princes, native peers, and high-born ladies bright,
Along whose brows the Queen's, new crowned, flashed coronets to light.
And so, the people at the gates, with priestly hands on high,
Which bring the first anointing to all legal majesty.
And so the DEAD—who lie in rows beneath the minster floor,
There, verily an awful state maintaining evermore;
The statesman whose clean palm will kiss no bribe whate'er it be.
The courtier who, for no fair queen, will rise up to his knee.
The court-dame who, for no court-tire, will leave her shroud behind.
The laureate who no courtlier rhyme than 'dust to dust' can find.
The kings and queens who having made that vow and worn that crown,
Descended unto lower thrones and darker, deep adown!
Dieu et mon droit—what is't to them?—what meaning can it have?—
The King of kings, the right of death—God's judgment and the grave.
And when betwixt the quick and dead, the young fair queen had vowed,
The living shouted 'May she live! Victoria, live!' aloud.
And as the loyal shouts went up, true spirits prayed between,
'The blessings happy monarchs have, be thine, O crownëd queen!'

III.

But now before her people's face she bendeth hers
anew,
And calls them, while she vows, to be her witness
thereunto.
She vowed to rule, and, in that oath, her childhood
put away.
She doth maintain her womanhood, in vowing love
to-day.
O, lovely lady!—let her vow!—such lips become
such vows,
And fairer goeth bridal wreath than crown with
vernal brows.
O, lovely lady!—let her vow! yea, let her vow to
love!—
And though she be no less a queen—with purples
hung above,
The pageant of a court behind, the royal kin around,
And woven gold to catch her looks turned maidenly
to ground,
Yet may the bride-veil hide from her a little of that
state,
While loving hopes, for retinues, about her sweetness
wait.
She vows to love who vowed to rule—(the chosen at
her side)
Let none say, God preserve the queen!—but rather,
Bless the bride!
None blow the trump, none bend the knee, none
violate the dream
Wherein no monarch but a wife, she to herself may
seem.
Or if ye say, Preserve the queen!—oh, breathe it
inward low—

She is a *woman*, and *beloved!*—and 'tis enough but so.
Count it enough, thou noble prince, who tak'st her by the hand,
And claimest for thy lady-love, our lady of the land!
And since, Prince Albert, men have called thy spirit high and rare,
And true to truth and brave for truth, as some at Augsburg were,—
We charge thee by thy lofty thoughts, and by thy poet-mind
Which not by glory and degree takes measure of mankind,
Esteem that wedded hand less dear for sceptre than for ring,
And hold her uncrowned womanhood to be the royal thing.

IV.

And now, upon our queen's last vow, what blessings shall we pray?
None, straitened to a shallow crown, will suit our lips to-day.
Behold, they must be free as love—they must be broad as free,
Even to the borders of heaven's light and earth's humanity.
Long live she!—send up loyal shouts—and true hearts pray between,—
'The blessings happy PEASANTS have, be thine, O crownéd queen!'

CROWNED AND BURIED.

I.

Napoleon!—years ago, and that great word
Compàct of human breath in hate and dread
And exultation, skied us overhead—
An atmosphere whose lightning was the sword
Scathing the cedars of the world,—drawn down
In burnings, by the metal of a crown.

II.

Napoleon! nations, while they cursed that name,
Shook at their own curse; and while others bore
Its sound, as of a trumpet, on before,
Brass-fronted legions justified its fame;
And dying men, on trampled battle-sods,
Near their last silence, uttered it for God's.

III.

Napoleon! sages, with high foreheads drooped,
Did use it for a problem: children small
Leapt up to greet it, as at manhood's call:
Priests blessed it from their altars overstooped
By meek-eyed Christs,—and widows with a moan
Spake it, when questioned why they sate alone.

IV.

That name consumed the silence of the snows
In Alpine keeping, holy and cloud-hid.
The mimic eagles dared what Nature's did,
And over-rushed her mountainous repose

In search of eyries; and the Egyptian river
Mingled the same word with its grand 'For ever.'

V.

That name was shouted near the pyramidal
Nilotic tombs, whose mummied habitants,
Packed to humanity's significance,
Motioned it back with stillness! shouts as idle
As hireling artists' work of myrrh and spice
Which swathed last glories round the Ptolemies.

VI.

The world's face changed to hear it. Kingly men
Came down in chidden babes' bewilderment
From autocratic places, each content
With sprinkled ashes for anointing.—Then
The people laughed, or wondered for the nonce,
To see one throne a composite of thrones.

VII.

Napoleon! even the torrid vastitude
Of India felt in throbbings of the air
That name which scattered by disastrous blare
All Europe's bound-lines,—drawn afresh in blood.
Napoleon—from the Russias, west to Spain!
And Austria trembled—till he heard her chain.

VIII.

And Germany was 'ware; and Italy
Oblivious of old fames—her laurel-locked,
High-ghosted Cæsars passing uninvoked—
Did crumble her own ruins with her knee,
To serve a newer.—Ay! but Frenchmen cast
A future from them nobler than her past.

IX.

For, verily, though France augustly rose
With that raised NAME, and did assume by such
The purple of the world, none gave so much
As she, in purchase—to speak plain, in loss—
Whose hands, toward freedom stretched, dropped paralyzed
To wield a sword or fit an undersized

X.

King's crown to a great man's head. And though along
Her Paris' streets, did float on frequent streams
Of triumph, pictured or emmarbled dreams
Dreamt right by genius in a world gone wrong,—
No dream, of all so won, was fair to see
As the lost vision of her liberty.

XI.

Napoleon! 'twas a high name lifted high!
It met at last God's thunder sent to clear
Our compassing and covering atmosphere
And open a clear sight beyond the sky
Of supreme empire; this of earth's was done—
And kings crept out again to feel the sun.

XII.

The kings crept out—the peoples sate at home,
And finding the long-invocated peace
(A pall embroidered with worn images
Of rights divine) too scant to cover doom
Such as they suffered,—cursed the corn that grew
Rankly, to bitter bread, on Waterloo.

XIII.

A deep gloom centered in the deep repose.
The nations stood up mute to count their dead.
And *he* who owned the NAME which vibrated
Through silence,—trusting to his noblest foes
When earth was all too grey for chivalry,
Died of their mercies 'mid the desert sea.

XIV.

O wild St. Helen! very still she kept him,
With a green willow for all pyramid,—
Which stirred a little if the low wind did,
A little more, if pilgrims overwept him.
Disparting the lithe boughs to see the clay
Which seemed to cover his for judgment-day.

XV.

Nay, not so long!—France kept her old affection
As deeply as the sepulchre the corse,
Until, dilated by such love's remorse
To a new angel of the resurrection,
She cried, 'Behold, thou England! I would have
The dead whereof thou wottest, from that grave.'

XVI.

And England answered in the courtesy
Which, ancient foes turned lovers, may befit,—
'Take back thy dead! and when thou buriest it,
Throw in all former strifes 'twixt thee and me.'
Amen, mine England! 'tis a courteous claim—
But ask a little room too . . . for thy shame!

XVII.

Because it was not well, it was not well,
Nor tuneful with thy lofty-chanted part
Among the Oceanides,—that Heart
To bind and bare and vex with vulture fell.
I would, my noble England! men might seek
All crimson stains upon thy breast—not cheek!

XVIII.

I would that hostile fleets had scarred Torbay,
Instead of the lone ship which waited moored
Until thy princely purpose was assured,
Then left a shadow, not to pass away—
Not for to-night's moon, nor to-morrow's sun!
Green watching hills, ye witnessed what was done!*

XIX.

But since it *was* done,—in sepulchral dust
We fain would pay back something of our debt
To France, if not to honour, and forget
How through much fear we falsified the trust
Of a fallen foe and exile.—We return
Orestes to Electra . . . in his urn.

XX.

A little urn—a little dust inside,
Which once outbalanced the large earth, albeit
To-day a four-years child might carry it
Sleek-browed and smiling, 'Let the burden 'bide!'
Orestes to Electra!—O fair town
Of Paris, how the wild tears will run down

* Written at Torquay.

XXI.

And run back in the chariot-marks of time,
When all the people shall come forth to meet
The passive victor, death-still in the street
He rode through 'mid the shouting and bell-chime
And martial music, under eagles which
Dyed their rapacious beaks at Austerlitz.

XXII.

Napoleon! he hath come again—borne home
Upon the popular ebbing heart,—a sea
Which gathers its own wrecks perpetually,
Majestically moaning. Give him room!—
Room for the dead in Paris! welcome solemn
And grave-deep, 'neath the cannon-moulded column!*

XXIII.

There, weapon spent and warrior spent may rest
From roar of fields,—provided Jupiter
Dare trust Saturnus to lie down so near
His bolts! and this he may. For, dispossessed
Of any godship lies the godlike arm—
The goat, Jove sucked, as likely to do harm.

XXIV.

And yet . . . Napoleon!—the recovered name
Shakes the old casements of the world! and we
Look out upon the passing pageantry,
Attesting that the Dead makes good his claim
To a French grave,—another kingdom won,
The last, of few spans—by Napoleon.

* It was the first intention to bury him under the column.

XXV.

Blood fell like dew beneath his sunrise—sooth;
But glittered dew-like in the covenanted
Meridian light. He was a despot—granted!
But the αυτος of his autocratic mouth
Said yea i' the people's French; he magnified
The image of the freedom he denied.

XXVI.

And if they asked for rights, he made reply
'Ye have my glory!'—and so, drawing round them
His ample purple, glorified and bound them
In an embrace that seemed identity.
He ruled them like a tyrant—true! but none
Were ruled like slaves: each felt Napoleon.

XXVII.

I do not praise this man: the man was flawed
For Adam—much more, Christ!—his knee unbent,
His hand unclean, his aspiration pent
Within a sword-sweep—pshaw!—but since he had
The genius to be loved, why let him have
The justice to be honoured in his grave.

XXVIII.

I think this nation's tears thus poured together,
Better than shouts. I think this funeral
Grander than crownings, though a Pope bless all.
I think this grave stronger than thrones. But whether
The crowned Napoleon or the buried clay
Be worthier, I discern not. Angels may.

TO FLUSH, MY DOG.

I.

Loving friend, the gift of one
Who her own true faith has run,
Through thy lower nature,*
Be my benediction said
With my hand upon thy head,
Gentle fellow-creature!

II.

Like a lady's ringlets brown,
Flow thy silken ears adown
Either side demurely
Of thy silver-suited breast,
Shining out from all the rest
Of thy body purely.

III.

Darkly brown thy body is,
Till the sunshine striking this
Alchemise its dulness,
When the sleek curls manifold
Flash all over into gold,
With a burnished fulness.

* This dog was the gift of my dear and admired friend, Miss Mitford, and belongs to the beautiful race she has rendered celebrated among English and American readers. The Flushes have their laurels as well as the Cæsars, the chief difference (at least the very head and front of it) consisting, perhaps, in the bald head of the latter under the crown. 1844.

IV.

Underneath my stroking hand,
Startled eyes of hazel bland
  Kindling, growing larger,
Up thou leapest with a spring,
Full of prank and curveting,
  Leaping like a charger.

V.

Leap! thy broad tail waves a light,
Leap! thy slender feet are bright,
  Canopied in fringes.
Leap—those tasselled ears of thine
Flicker strangely, fair and fine,
  Down their golden inches.

VI.

Yet, my pretty, sportive friend,
Little is 't to such an end
  That I praise thy rareness!
Other dogs may be thy peers
Haply in these drooping ears,
  And this glossy fairness.

VII.

But of *thee* it shall be said,
This dog watched beside a bed
  Day and night unweary,—
Watched within a curtained room,
Where no sunbeam broke the gloom
  Round the sick and dreary.

VIII.

Roses gathered for a vase,
In that chamber died apace,
  Beam and breeze resigning.
This dog only, waited on,
Knowing that when light is gone
  Love remains for shining.

IX.

Other dogs in thymy dew
Tracked the hares and followed through
  Sunny moor or meadow.
This dog only, crept and crept
Next a languid cheek that slept,
  Sharing in the shadow.

X.

Other dogs of loyal cheer
Bounded at the whistle clear,
  Up the woodside hieing.
This dog only, watched in reach
Of a faintly uttered speech,
  Or a louder sighing.

XI.

And if one or two quick tears
Dropped upon his glossy ears,
  Or a sigh came double,—
Up he sprang in eager haste,
Fawning, fondling, breathing fast,
  In a tender trouble.

XII.

And this dog was satisfied
If a pale thin hand would glide
  Down his dewlaps sloping,—
Which he pushed his nose within,
After, platforming his chin
  On the palm left open.

XIII.

This dog, if a friendly voice
Call him now to blyther choice
  Than such chamber-keeping,
'Come out!' praying from the door,—
Presseth backward as before,
  Up against me leaping.

XIV.

Therefore to this dog will I,
Tenderly not scornfully,
  Render praise and favour:
With my hand upon his head,
Is my benediction said
  Therefore, and forever.

XV.

And because he loves me so,
Better than his kind will do
  Often, man or woman,
Give I back more love again
Than dogs often take of men,
  Leaning from my Human.

XVI.

Blessings on thee, dog of mine,
Pretty collars make thee fine,
  Sugared milk make fat thee!
Pleasures wag on in thy tail,
Hands of gentle motion fail
  Nevermore, to pat thee!

XVII.

Downy pillow take thy head,
Silken coverlid bestead,
  Sunshine help thy sleeping!
No fly's buzzing wake thee up,
No man break thy purple cup,
  Set for drinking deep in.

XVIII.

Whiskered cats arointed flee,
Sturdy stoppers keep from thee
  Cologne distillations;
Nuts lie in thy path for stones,
And thy feast-day macaroons
  Turn to daily rations!

XIX.

Mock I thee, in wishing weal?—
Tears are in my eyes to feel
  Thou art made so straightly,
Blessing needs must straighten too,—
Little canst thou joy or do,
  Thou who lovest *greatly*.

XX.

Yet be blessëd to the height
Of all good and all delight
Pervious to thy nature;
Only *loved* beyond that line,
With a love that answers thine,
Loving fellow-creature!

THE DESERTED GARDEN.

I MIND me in the days departed,
How often underneath the sun
With childish bounds I used to run
To a garden long deserted.

The beds and walks were vanished quite;
And wheresoe'er had struck the spade,
The greenest grasses Nature laid,
To sanctify her right.

I called the place my wilderness,
For no one entered there but I.
The sheep looked in, the grass to espy,
And passed it ne'ertheless.

The trees were interwoven wild,
And spread their boughs enough about
To keep both sheep and shepherd out,
But not a happy child.

Adventurous joy it was for me!
I crept beneath the boughs, and found
A circle smooth of mossy ground
Beneath a poplar-tree.

Old garden rose-trees hedged it in,
Bedropt with roses waxen-white
Well satisfied with dew and light
And careless to be seen.

Long years ago it might befall,
When all the garden flowers were trim,
The grave old gardener prided him
On these the most of all.

Some lady, stately overmuch,
Here moving with a silken noise,
Has blushed beside them at the voice
That likened her to such.

And these, to make a diadem,
She often may have plucked and twined,
Half-smiling as it came to mind
That few would look at *them*.

Oh, little thought that lady proud,
A child would watch her fair white rose,
When buried lay her whiter brows,
And silk was changed for shroud!—

Nor thought that gardener, (full of scorns
For men unlearned and simple phrase,)
A child would bring it all its praise,
By creeping through the thorns!

To me upon my low moss seat,
Though never a dream the roses sent
Of science or love's compliment, .
I ween they smelt as sweet.

It did not move my grief to see
The trace of human step departed.
Because the garden was deserted,
The blither place for me!

Friends, blame me not! a narrow ken,
Has childhood 'twixt the sun and sward:
We draw the moral afterward—
We feel the gladness then.

And gladdest hours for me did glide
In silence at the rose-tree wall.
A thrush made gladness musical
Upon the other side.

Nor he nor I did e'er incline
To peck or pluck the blossoms white.
How should I know but roses might
Lead lives as glad as mine?

To make my hermit-home complete,
I brought clear water from the spring
Praised in its own low murmuring,—
And cresses glossy wet.

And so, I thought, my likeness grew
(Without the melancholy tale)
To 'gentle hermit of the dale,'
And Angelina too.

For oft I read within my nook
Such minstrel stories; till the breeze
Made sounds poetic in the trees,—
And then I shut the book.

If I shut this wherein I write
I hear no more the wind athwart
Those trees,—nor feel that childish heart
Delighting in delight.

My childhood from my life is parted,
My footstep from the moss which drew
Its fairy circle round: anew
The garden is deserted.

Another thrush may there rehearse
The madrigals which sweetest are;
No more for me!—myself afar
Do sing a sadder verse.

Ah me, ah me! when erst I lay
In that child's-nest so greenly wrought,
I laughed unto myself and thought
'The time will pass away.'

And still I laughed, and did not fear
But that, whene'er was passed away
The childish time, some happier play
My womanhood would cheer.

I knew the time would pass away,
And yet, beside the rose-tree wall,
Dear God, how seldom, if at all,
Did I look up to pray!

The time is past;—and now that grows
The cypress high among the trees,
And I behold white sepulchres
As well as the white rose,—

When graver, meeker thoughts are given,
And I have learnt to lift my face,
Reminded how earth's greenest place
The colour draws from heaven,—

It something saith for earthly pain,
But more for Heavenly promise free,
That I who was, would shrink to be
That happy child again.

MY DOVES.

O Wiesheit! Du red'st wie eine Taube!—GOETHE.

My little doves have left a nest
Upon an Indian tree,
Whose leaves fantastic take their rest
Or motion from the sea;
For, ever there, the sea-winds go
With sunlit paces to and fro.

The tropic flowers looked up to it,
The tropic stars looked down,
And there my little doves did sit,
With feathers softly brown,
And glittering eyes that showed their right
To general Nature's deep delight.

And God them taught, at every close
Of murmuring waves beyond,
And green leaves round, to interpose
Their choral voices fond,
Interpreting that love must be
The meaning of the earth and sea.

Fit ministers! Of living loves,
Theirs hath the calmest fashion,
Their living voice the likest moves
To lifeless intonation,
The lovely monotone of springs
And winds, and such insensate things.

My little doves were ta'en away
From that glad nest of theirs,
Across an ocean rolling grey,
And tempest-clouded airs.
My little doves,—who lately knew
The sky and wave by warmth and blue!

And now, within the city prison,
In mist and chillness pent,
With sudden upward look they listen
For sounds of past content—
For lapse of water, swell of breeze,
Or nut-fruit falling from the trees.

The stir without the glow of passion,
The triumph of the mart,
The gold and silver as they clash on
Man's cold metallic heart—
The roar of wheels, the cry for bread,—
These only sounds are heard instead.

Yet still, as on my human hand
Their fearless heads they lean,
And almost seem to understand
What human musings mean,
(Their eyes, with such a plaintive shine,
Are fastened upwardly to mine!)

Soft falls their chant as on the nest
Beneath the sunny zone;
For love that stirred it in their breast
Has not aweary grown,
And 'neath the city's shade can keep
The well of music clear and deep.

And love that keeps the music, fills
With pastoral memories.
All echoing from out the hills,
All droppings from the skies,
All flowings from the wave and wind,
Remembered in their chant, I find.

So teach ye me the wisest part,
My little doves! to move
Along the city-ways with heart
Assured by holy love,
And vocal with such songs as own
A fountain to the world unknown.

'Twas hard to sing by Babel's stream—
More hard, in Babel's street!
But if the soulless creatures deem
Their music not unmeet
For sunless walls—let *us* begin,
Who wear immortal wings within!

To me, fair memories belong
Of scenes that used to bless,
For no regret, but present song,
And lasting thankfulness,
And very soon to break away,
Like types, in purer things than they.

I will have hopes that cannot fade,
For flowers the valley yields!
I will have humble thoughts instead
Of silent, dewy fields!
My spirit and my God shall be
My sea-ward hill, my boundless sea.

HECTOR IN THE GARDEN.

I.

Nine years old! The first of any
Seem the happiest years that come.
Yet when *I* was nine, I said
No such word!—I thought instead
That the Greeks had used as many
In besieging Ilium.

II.

Nine green years had scarcely brought me
To my childhood's haunted spring.
I had life, like flowers and bees
In betwixt the country trees,
And the sun the pleasure taught me
Which he teacheth every thing.

III.

If the rain fell, there was sorrow,
Little head leant on the pane,
Little finger drawing down it
The long trailing drops upon it,
And the 'Rain, rain, come to-morrow,'
Said for charm against the rain.

IV.

Such a charm was right Canidian
Though you meet it with a jeer!
If I said it long enough,
Then the rain hummed dimly off,
And the thrush with his pure Lydian
Was left only to the ear;

V.

And the sun and I together
Went a-rushing out of doors!
We, our tender spirits, drew
Over hill and dale in view,
Glimmering hither, glimmering thither,
In the footsteps of the showers.

VI.

Underneath the chestnuts dripping,
Through the grasses wet and fair,
Straight I sought my garden-ground,
With the laurel on the mound,
And the pear-tree oversweeping
A side-shadow of green air.

VII.

In the garden lay supinely
A huge giant wrought of spade!
Arms and legs were stretched at length
In a passive giant strength,—
The fine meadow turf, cut finely,
Round them laid and interlaid.

VIII.

Call him Hector, son of Priam!
Such his title and degree.
With my rake I smoothed his brow,
Both his cheeks I weeded through,
But a rhymer such as I am,
Scarcè can sing his dignity.

IX.

Eyes of gentianellas azure,
Staring, winking at the skies.
Nose of gillyflowers and box.
Scented grasses put for locks,
Which a little breeze, at pleasure,
Set a-waving round his eyes.

X.

Brazen helm of daffodillies,
With a glitter toward the light.
Purple violets for the mouth,
Breathing perfumes west and south;
And a sword of flashing lilies,
Holden ready for the fight.

XI.

And a breastplate made of daisies,
Closely fitting, leaf on leaf.
Periwinkles interlaced
Drawn for belt about the waist;
While the brown bees, humming praises,
Shot their arrows round the chief.

XII.

And who knows, (I sometimes wondered,)
If the disembodied soul
Of old Hector, once of Troy,
Might not take a dreary joy
Here to enter—if it thundered,
Rolling up the thunder-roll?

XIII.

Rolling this way from Troy-ruin,
In this body rude and rife
Just to enter, and take rest
'Neath the daisies of the breast—
They, with tender roots, renewing
His heroic heart to life?

XIV.

Who could know? I sometimes started
At a motion or a sound!
Did his mouth speak—naming Troy,
With an ὀτοτοτοτοῖ?
Did the pulse of the Strong-hearted
Make the daisies tremble-round?

XV

It was hard to answer, often:
But the birds sang in the tree—
But the little birds sang bold
In the pear-tree green and old,
And my terror seemed to soften
Through the courage of their glee.

XVI.

Oh, the birds, the tree, the ruddy
And white blossoms, sleek with rain!
Oh, my garden, rich with pansies!
Oh, my childhood's bright romances!
All revive, like Hector's body,
And I see them stir again!

XVII.

And despite life's changes—chances,
And despite the deathbell's toll,
They press on me in full seeming!
Help, some angel! stay this dreaming!
As the birds sang in the branches,
Sing God's patience through my soul!

XVIII.

That no dreamer, no neglecter
Of the present's work unsped,
I may wake up and be doing,
Life's heroic ends pursuing,
Though my past is dead as Hector,
And though Hector is twice dead.

SLEEPING AND WATCHING.

I.

Sleep on, baby, on the floor,
Tired of all the playing!
Sleep with smile the sweeter for
That, you dropped away in!
On your curls' full roundness, stand
Golden lights serenely.
One cheek, pushed out by the hand,
Folds the dimple inly.
Little head and little foot
Heavy laid for pleasure,
Underneath the lids half shut,
Slants the shining azure.—
Open-soul in noonday sun,
So, you lie and slumber!
Nothing evil having done,
Nothing can encumber.

II.

I, who cannot sleep as well,
Shall I sigh to view you?
Or sigh further to foretell
All that may undo you?
Nay, keep smiling, little child,
Ere the sorrow neareth.
I will smile too! patience mild
Pleasure's token weareth.

Nay, keep sleeping before loss.
I shall sleep, though losing!
As by cradle, so by cross,
Sure is the reposing.

III.

And God knows who sees us twain
Child at childish leisure,
I am near as tired of pain
As you seem of pleasure.
Very soon too, by His grace
Gently wrapt around me,
Shall I show as calm a face,
Shall I sleep as soundly.
Differing in this, that you
Clasp your playthings, sleeping,
While my hand shall drop the few
Given to my keeping.
Differing in this, that I
Sleeping shall be colder,
And in waking presently,
Brighter to beholder.
Differing in this beside
(Sleeper, have you heard me?
Do you move, and open wide
Eyes of wonder toward me?)—
That while you I thus recall
From your sleep, I solely,
Me from mine an angel shall,
With reveille holy.

SOUNDS.

Ηκνυσας ἡ ουκ ηκουσας;——
ÆSCHYLUS.

I.

HARKEN, harken!
The rapid river carrieth
Many noises underneath
The hoary ocean:
Teaching his solemnity
Sounds of inland life and glee.
Learnt beside the waving tree,
When the winds in summer prank
Toss the shades from bank to bank,
And the quick rains, in emotion
Which rather gladdens earth than grieves,
Count and visibly rehearse
The pulses of the universe
Upon the summer leaves—
Learnt among the lilies straight,
When they bow them to the weight
Of many bees whose hidden hum
Seemeth from themselves to come—
Learnt among the grasses green,
Where the rustling mice are seen
By the gleaming, as they run,
Of their quick eyes in the sun;
And lazy sheep are browzing through,
With their noses trailed in dew;

And the squirrel leaps adown,
Holding fast the filbert brown;
And the lark, with more of mirth
In his song than suits the earth,
Droppeth some in soaring high,
To pour the rest out in the sky;
While the woodland doves, apart
In the copse's leafy heart,
Solitary, not ascetic,
Hidden and yet vocal, seen
Joining, in a lovely psalm,
Man's despondence, nature's calm,
Half mystical and half pathetic,
Like a sighing in a dream.*
All these sounds the river telleth,
Softened to an undertone
Which ever and anon he swelleth
By a burden of his own,
In the ocean's ear.
Ay! and Ocean seems to hear
With an inward gentle scorn,
Smiling to his caverns worn.

* 'While floating up bright forms ideal,
Mistress, or friend, around me stream;
Half sense-supplied, and half unreal,
Like music mingling with a dream.'
John Kenyon.

I do not doubt that the 'music' of the two concluding lines mingled, though very unconsciously, with my own 'dream,' and gave their form and pressure to the above distich. The ideas however being sufficiently distinct, I am satisfied with sending this note to the press after my verses, and with acknowledging another obligation to the valued friend to whom I already owe so many. 1844.

II.

Harken, harken!
The child is shouting at his play
Just in the tramping funeral's way.
The widow moans as she turns aside
To shun the face of the blushing bride,
While shaking the tower of the ancient church,
The marriage bells do swing.
And in the shadow of the porch
An idiot sits, with his lean hands full
Of hedgerow flowers and a poet's skull,
Laughing loud and gibbering,
Because it is so brown a thing,
While he sticketh the gaudy poppies red
In and out the senseless head
Where all sweet fancies grew instead.
And you may hear at the self-same time,
Another poet who reads his rhyme,
Low as a brook in the summer air,—
Save when he droppeth his voice adown,
To dream of the amaranthine crown
His mortal brows shall wear.
And a baby cries with a feeble sound
'Neath the weary weight of the life new-found.
And an old man groans,—with his testament
Only half-signed,—for the life that's spent.
And lovers twain do softly say,
As they sit on a grave, 'For aye, for aye.'
And foemen twain, while earth their mother
Looks greenly upward, curse each other.
A school-boy drones his task, with looks
Cast over the page to the elm-tree rooks.
A lonely student cries aloud
Eureka! clasping at his shroud.

A beldame's age-cracked voice doth sing
To a little infant slumbering.
A maid forgot æn weeps alone,
Muffling her sobs on the trysting stone.
A sick man wakes at his own mouth's wail.
A gossip coughs in her thrice-told tale.
A muttering gamester shakes the dice.
A reaper foretells good luck from the skies.
A monarch vows as he lifts his hands to them.
A patriot leaving his native land to them,
Cries to the world against perjured state.
A priest disserts upon linen skirts.
A sinner screams for one hope more.
A dancer's feet do palpitate
A piper's music out on the floor
And nigh to the awful Dead, the living
Low speech and stealthy steps are giving,
Because he cannot hear!
And *he* who on that narrow bier
Has room enough, is closely wound
In a silence piercing more than sound.

III.

Harken, harken!
God speaketh to thy soul,
Using the súpreme voice which doth confound
All life with consciousness of Deity,
All senses into one,—
As the seer-saint of Patmos, loving John
(For whom did backward roll
The cloud-gate of the future) turned to *see*
The Voice which spake. It speaketh now,
Through the regular breath of the calm creation,
Through the moan of the creature's desolation

Striking, and in its stroke, resembling
The memory of a solemn vow,
Which pierceth the din of a festival
To one in the midst,—and he letteth fall
The cup, with a sudden trembling.

IV.

Harken, harken!
God speaketh in thy soul,
Saying, 'O thou that movest
With feeble steps across this earth of mine,
To break beside the fount thy golden bowl
And spill its purple wine,—
Look up to heaven and see how like a scroll,
My right hand hath thine immortality
In an eternal grasping! thou, that lovest
The songful birds and grasses underfoot,
And also what change mars and tombs pollute—
I am the end of love!—give love to *Me!*
O thou that sinnest, grace doth more abound
Than all thy sin! sit still beneath my rood,
And count the droppings of my victim-blood,
And seek none other sound!'

V.

Harken, harken!
Shall we hear the lapsing river
And our brother's sighing ever,
And not the voice of God?

THE CLAIM.

I.

Grief sate upon a rock and sighed one day,
(Sighing is all her rest!)
'Wellaway, wellaway, ah, wellaway!'
As ocean beat the stone, did she her breast,
'Ah, wellaway! . . ah me! alas, ah me!'
Such sighing uttered she.

II.

A cloud spake out of heaven, as soft as rain
That falls on water,—'Lo,
The Winds have wandered from me! I remain
Alone in the sky-waste, and cannot go
To lean my whiteness on the mountain blue
Till wanted for more dew.

III.

'The Sun has struck my brain to weary peace,
Whereby constrained and pale
I spin for him a larger golden fleece
Than Jason's, yearning for as full a sail.
Sweet Grief, when thou hast sighèd to thy mind,
Give me a sigh for wind.

IV.

And let it carry me adown the west.'
But Love, who, prostrated,
Lay at Grief's foot, his lifted eyes possessed
Of her full image, answered in her stead;
'Now nay, now nay! she shall not give away
What is my wealth, for any Cloud that flieth.
Where Grief makes moan,
Love claims his own!
And therefore do I lie here night and day,
And eke my life out with the breath she sigheth.'

SONNETS.

THE SOUL'S EXPRESSION.

With stammering lips and insufficient sound
I strive and struggle to deliver right
That music of my nature, day and night
With dream and thought and feeling interwound,
And inly answering all the senses round
With octaves of a mystic depth and height
Which step out grandly to the infinite
From the dark edges of the sensual ground!
This song of soul I struggle to outbear
Through portals of the sense, sublime and whole,
And utter all myself into the air.
But if I did it,—as the thunder-roll
Breaks its own cloud, my flesh would perish there,
Before that dread apocalypse of soul.

THE SERAPH AND POET.

The seraph sings before the manifest
God-One, and in the burning of the Seven,
And with the full life of consummate Heaven
Heaving beneath him, like a mother's breast
Warm with her first-born's slumber in that nest.
The poet sings upon the earth grave-riven,
Before the naughty world, soon self-forgiven
For wronging him,—and in the darkness prest
From his own soul by worldly weights. Even so
Sing, seraph with the glory! heaven is high.
Sing, poet with the sorrow! earth is low.
The universe's inward voices cry
'Amen' to either song of joy and woe.
Sing, seraph,—poet,—sing on equally!

BEREAVEMENT.

When some Belovèds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonied fell and could not pray,—
A thought within me to myself did say,
'Is God less God, that *thou* art left undone?
Rise, worship, bless Him, in this sackcloth spun,
As in that purple!'—But I answered, Nay!
What child his filial heart in words can loose,
If he behold his tender father raise
The hand that chastens sorely? can he choose
But sob in silence with an upward gaze?—
And *my* great Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in speechless tears, both prayer and praise.

CONSOLATION.

All are not taken; there are left behind
Living Belovèds, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a happy thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
But if it were not so—if I could find
No love in all the world for comforting,
Nor any path but hollowly did ring,
Where 'dust to dust' the love from life disjoined,
And, if, before those sepulchres unmoving,
I stood alone, (as some forsaken lamb
Goes bleating up the moors in weary dearth)
Crying 'Where are ye, O my loved and loving?' . . .
I know a Voice would sound, 'Daughter, I am.
Can I suffice for Heaven, and not for earth?'

TO MARY RUSSELL MITFORD
IN HER GARDEN.

What time I lay these rhymes anear thy feet,
Benignant friend, I will not proudly say
As better poets use, 'These *flowers* I lay,'
Because I would not wrong thy roses sweet,
Blaspheming so their name. And yet, repeat,
Thou, overleaning them this springtime day,
With heart as open to love as theirs to May,
—'Low-rooted verse may reach some heavenly heat,
Even like my blossoms, if as nature-true,
Though not as precious.' Thou art unperplext,
Dear friend, in whose dear writings drops the dew
And blow the natural airs,—thou, who art next
To nature's self in cheering the world's view,—
To preach a sermon on so known a text!

ON A PORTRAIT OF WORDSWORTH BY R. B. HAYDON.

Wordsworth upon Helvellyn! Let the cloud
Ebb audibly along the mountain-wind
Then break against the rock, and show behind
The lowland valleys floating up to crowd
The sense with beauty. He with forehead bowed
And humble-lidded eyes, as one inclined
Before the sovran thought of his own mind,
And very meek with inspirations proud,
Takes here his rightful place as poet-priest
By the high altar, singing prayer and prayer
To the higher Heavens. A noble vision free
Our Haydon's hand has flung out from the mist!
No portrait this, with Academic air!
This is the poet and his poetry.

PAST AND FUTURE.

My future will not copy fair my past
On any leaf but Heaven's. Be fully done,
Supernal Will! I would not fain be one
Who, satisfying thirst and breaking fast
Upon the fulness of the heart, at last
Says no grace after meat. My wine has run
Indeed out of my cup, and there is none
To gather up the bread of my repast
Scattered and trampled,—yet I find some good
In earth's green herbs, and streams that bubble up
Clear from the darkling ground,—content until
I sit with angels before better food.
Dear Christ! when thy new vintage fills my cup,
This hand shall shake no more, nor that wine spill.

IRREPARABLENESS.

I HAVE been in the meadows all the day
And gathered there the nosegay that you see,
Singing within myself as a bird or bee
When such do field-work on a morn of May.
But now I look upon my flowers, decay
Has met them in my hands more fatally
Because more warmly clasped,—and sobs are free
To come instead of songs. What do you say,
Sweet counsellors, dear friends? that I should go
Back straightway to the fields, and gather more?
Another, sooth, may do it,—but not I!
My heart is very tired, my strength is low,
My hands are full of blossoms plucked before,
Held dead within them till myself shall die.

TEARS.

THANK God, bless God, all ye who suffer not
More grief than ye can weep for. That is well—
That is light grieving! lighter, none befel,
Since Adam forfeited the primal lot.
Tears! what are tears? The babe weeps in its cot,
The mother singing,—at her marriage-bell
The bride weeps,—and before the oracle
Of high-faned hills, the poet has forgot
Such moisture on his cheeks. Thank God for grace,
Ye who weep only! If, as some have done,
Ye grope tear-blinded in a desert place
And touch but tombs,—look up! those tears will run
Soon in long rivers down the lifted face,
And leave the vision clear for stars and sun.

GRIEF.

I TELL you, hopeless grief is passionless;
That only men incredulous of despair,
Half-taught in anguish, through the midnight air
Beat upward to God's throne in loud access
Of shrieking and reproach. Full desertness
In souls as countries, lieth silent-bare
Under the blanching, vertical eye-glare
Of the absolute Heavens. Deep-hearted man, express
Grief for thy Dead in silence like to death:—
Most like a monumental statue set
In everlasting watch and moveless woe,
Till itself crumble to the dust beneath.
Touch it: the marble eyelids are not wet.
If it could weep, it could arise and go.

SUBSTITUTION.

WHEN some belovëd voice that was to you
Both sound and sweetness, faileth suddenly,
And silence against which you dare not cry,
Aches round you like a strong disease and new—
What hope? what help? what music will undo
That silence to your sense? Not friendship's sigh,
Not reason's subtle count. Not melody
Of viols, nor of pipes that Faunus blew.
Not songs of poets, nor of nightingales,
Whose hearts leap upward through the cypress-trees
To the clear moon! nor yet the spheric laws
Self-chanted,—nor the angels' sweet All hails,
Met in the smile of God. Nay, none of these.
Speak THOU, availing Christ!—and fill this pause.

COMFORT.

Speak low to me, my Saviour, low and sweet
From out the hallelujahs, sweet and low,
Lest I should fear and fall, and miss thee so
Who art not missed by any that entreat.
Speak to me as to Mary at thy feet!
And if no precious gums my hands bestow,
Let my tears drop like amber, while I go
In reach of thy divinest voice complete
In humanest affection—thus, in sooth
To lose the sense of losing. As a child,
Whose song-bird seeks the wood for evermore,
Is sung to in its stead by mother's mouth,
Till, sinking on her breast, love reconciled,
He sleeps the faster that he wept before.

PERPLEXED MUSIC.

AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED TO E. J.

Experience, like a pale musician, holds
A dulcimer of patience in his hand,
Whence harmonies we cannot understand,
Of God's will in his worlds, the strain unfolds
In sad, perplexed minor. Deathly colds
Fall on us while we hear and countermand
Our sanguine heart back from the fancy-land
With nightingales in visionary wolds.
We murmur,—'Where is any certain tune
Or measured music, in such notes as these?'—
But angels, leaning from the golden seat,
Art not so minded; their fine ear hath won
The issue of completed cadences,
And, smiling down the stars, they whisper—Sweet.

WORK.

What are we set on earth for? Say, to toil;
Nor seek to leave thy tending of the vines,
For all the heat o' the day, till it declines.
And death's mild curfew shall from work assoil.
God did anoint thee with his odorous oil,
To wrestle, not to reign; and He assigns
All thy tears over, like pure crystallines,
For younger fellow-workers of the soil
To wear for amulets. So others shall
Take patience, labour, to their heart and hand,
From thy hand, and thy heart, and thy brave cheer,
And God's grace fructify through thee to all.
The least flower, with a brimming cup, may stand,
And share its dew-drop with another near.

FUTURITY.

And, O beloved voices, upon which
Ours passionately call, because erelong
Ye brake off in the middle of that song
We sang together softly, to enrich
The poor world with the sense of love, and witch
The heart out of things evil,—I am strong,
Knowing ye are not lost for aye among
The hills, with last year's thrush. God keeps a niche
In Heaven, to hold our idols: and albeit
He brake them to our faces, and denied
That our close kisses should impair their white,—
I know we shall behold them raised, complete,
The dust swept from their beauty,—glorified
New Memnons singing in the great God-light.

THE TWO SAYINGS.

Two sayings of the Holy Scriptures beat
Like pulses in the church's brow and breast!
And by them, we find rest in our unrest,
And heart-deep in salt tears, do yet entreat
God's fellowship, as if on heavenly seat.
The first is JESUS WEPT,—whereon is prest
Full many a sobbing face that drops its best
And sweetest waters on the record sweet.
And one is, where the Christ, denied and scorned,
LOOKED UPON PETER. Oh, to render plain,
By help of having loved a little and mourned,
That look of sovran love and sovran pain
Which HE, who could not sin yet suffered, turned
On him who could reject but not sustain!

THE LOOK.

THE Saviour looked on Peter. Ay, no word,
No gesture of reproach! the Heavens serene
Though heavy with armed justice, did not lean
Their thunders that way! the forsaken Lord
Looked only, on the traitor. None record
What that look was, none guess; for those who have
seen
Wronged lovers loving through a death-pang keen,
Or pale-cheeked martyrs smiling to a sword,
Have missed Jehovah at the judgment-call.
And Peter, from the height of blasphemy—
'I never knew this man'—did quail and fall,
As knowing straight THAT God, and turnëd free
And went out speechless from the face of all,
And filled the silence, weeping bitterly.

THE MEANING OF THE LOOK.

I THINK that look of Christ might seem to say—
'Thou Peter! art thou then a common stone
Which I at last must break my heart upon,
For all God's charge to His high angels may
Guard my foot better. Did I yesterday
Wash *thy* feet, my beloved, that they should run
Quick to deny me 'neath the morning sun?
And do thy kisses, like the rest, betray?
The cock crows coldly.—Go, and manifest
A late contrition, but no bootless fear!
For when thy final need is dreariest,
Thou shalt not be denied, as I am here—
My voice, to God and angels, shall attest,
Because I KNOW *this man, let him be clear.*'

A THOUGHT FOR A LONELY DEATH-BED.

INSCRIBED TO MY FRIEND, E. C.

IF God compel thee to this destiny,
To die alone,—with none beside thy bed
To ruffle round with sobs thy last word said,
And mark with tears the pulses ebb from thee,—
Pray then alone—'O Christ, come tenderly!
By thy forsaken Sonship in the red
Drear wine-press,—by the wilderness outspread,—
And the lone garden where Thine agony
Fell bloody from thy brow,—by all of those
Permitted desolations, comfort mine!
No earthly friend being near me, interpose
No deathly angel, twixt my face and Thine,
But stoop Thyself to gather my life's rose,
And smile away my mortal to Divine.'

WORK AND CONTEMPLATION.

The woman singeth at her spinning-wheel
A pleasant chant, ballad, or barcarole.
She thinketh of her song, upon the whole,
Far more than of her flax; and yet the reel
Is full, and artfully her fingers feel
With quick adjustment, provident control,
The lines, too subtly twisted to unroll,
Out to a perfect thread. I hence appeal
To the dear Christian church—that we may do
Our Father's business in these temples mirk,
Thus swift and stedfast,—thus, intent and strong;
While, thus, apart from toil, our souls pursue
Some high, calm, spheric tune, and prove our work
The better for the sweetness of our song.

PAIN IN PLEASURE.

A Thought lay like a flower upon mine heart,
And drew around it other thoughts like bees
For multitude and thirst of sweetnesses,—
Whereat rejoicing, I desired the art
Of the Greek whistler, who to wharf and mart
Could lure those insect swarms from orange-trees,
That I might hive with me such thoughts, and please
My soul so, always. Foolish counterpart
Of a weak man's vain wishes! While I spoke,
The thought I called a flower, grew nettle-rough—
The thoughts, called bees, stung me to festering.
Oh, entertain (cried Reason, as she woke,)
Your best and gladdest thoughts but long enough,
And they will all prove sad enough to sting.

FLUSH OR FAUNUS.

You see this dog. It was but yesterday
I mused forgetful of his presence here
Till thought on thought drew downward tear on tear,
When from the pillow, where wet-cheeked I lay,
A head as hairy as Faunus, thrust its way
Right sudden against my face,—two golden-clear
Great eyes astonished mine,—a drooping ear
Did flap me on either cheek to dry the spray!
I started first, as some Arcadian,
Amazed by goatly god in twilight grove;
But, as the bearded vision closelier ran
My tears off, I knew Flush, and rose above
Surprise and sadness,—thanking the true PAN,
Who, by low creatures, leads to heights of love.

FINITE AND INFINITE.

THE wind sounds only in opposing straights,
The sea, beside the shore; man's spirit rends
Its quiet only up against the ends
Of wants and oppositions, loves and hates,
Where, worked and worn by passionate debates,
And losing by the loss it apprehends,
The flesh rocks round, and every breath it sends
Is ravelled to a sigh. All tortured states
Suppose a straitened place. Jehovah Lord,
Make room for rest, around me! out of sight
Now float me, of the vexing land abhorred,
Till in deep calms of space, my soul may right
Her nature,—shoot large sail on lengthening cord,
And rush exultant on the Infinite.

AN APPREHENSION.

If all the gentlest-hearted friends I know
Concentred in one heart their gentleness,
That still grew gentler, till its pulse was less
For life than pity,—I should yet be slow
To bring my own heart nakedly below
The palm of such a friend, that he should press
Motive, condition, means, appliances,
My false ideal joy and fickle woe,
Out full to light and knowledge; I should fear
Some plait between the brows—some rougher chime
In the free voice . . . . O angels, let your flood
Of bitter scorn dash on me! do ye hear
What *I* say, who bear calmly all the time
This everlasting face to face with God?

DISCONTENT.

Light human nature is too lightly tost
And ruffled without cause,—complaining on,
Restless with rest—until, being overthrown,
It learneth to lie quiet. Let a frost
Or a small wasp have crept to the innermost
Of our ripe peach, or let the wilful sun
Shine westward of our window,—straight we run
A furlong's sigh, as if the world were lost.
But what time through the heart and through the brain
God hath transfixed us,—we, so moved before,
Attain to a calm. Ay, shouldering weights of pain,
We anchor in deep waters, safe from shore,
And hear submissive, o'er the stormy main,
God's chartered judgments walk for evermore.

PATIENCE TAUGHT BY NATURE.

'O DREARY life!' we cry, 'O dreary life!'
And still the generations of the birds
Sing through our sighing, and the flocks and herds
Serenely live while we are keeping strife
With heaven's true purpose in us, as a knife
Against which we may struggle! ocean girds
Unslackened the dry land, savannah-swards
Unweary sweep,—hills watch, unworn; and rife
Meek leaves drop yearly from the forest-trees,
To show above the unwasted stars that pass
In their old glory. O thou god of old,
Grant me some smaller grace than comes to these!—
But so much patience, as a blade of grass
Grows by contented through the heat and cold.

CHEERFULNESS TAUGHT BY REASON.

I THINK we are too ready with complaint
In this fair world of God's. Had we no hope
Indeed beyond the zenith and the slope
Of yon grey blank sky, we might grow faint
To muse upon eternity's constraint
Round our aspirant souls; but since the scope
Must widen early, is it well to droop
For a few days consumed in loss and taint?
O pusillanimous Heart, be comforted,—
And, like a cheerful traveller, take the road,
Singing beside the hedge. What if the bread
Be bitter in thine inn, and thou unshod
To meet the flints?—At least it may be said,
'Because the way is *short*, I thank thee, God!'

EXAGGERATION.

We overstate the ills of life, and take
Imagination (given us to bring down
The choirs of singing angels overshone
By God's clear glory) down our earth to rake
The dismal snows instead,—flake following flake,
To cover all the corn. We walk upon
The shadow of hills across a level thrown,
And pant like climbers. Near the alderbrake
We sigh so loud, the nightingale within
Refuses to sing loud, as else she would.
O brothers! let us leave the shame and sin
Of taking vainly, in a plaintive mood,
The holy name of Grief!—holy herein,
That, by the grief of One, came all our good.

ADEQUACY.

Now by the verdure on thy thousand hills,
Beloved England,—doth the earth appear
Quite good enough for men to overbear
The will of God in, with rebellious wills!
We cannot say the morning-sun fulfils
Ingloriously its course, nor that the clear
Strong stars without significance insphere
Our habitation. We, meantime, our ills
Heap up against this good, and lift a cry
Against this work-day world, this ill-spread feast,
As if ourselves were better certainly
Than what we come to. Maker and High Priest,
I ask thee not my joys to multiply,—
Only to make me worthier of the least.

TO GEORGE SAND.

A DESIRE.

Thou large-brained woman and large-hearted man,
Self-called George Sand! whose soul, amid the lions
Of thy tumultuous senses, moans defiance,
And answers roar for roar, as spirits can!
I would some mild miraculous thunder ran
Above the applauded circus, in appliance
Of thine own nobler nature's strength and science,
Drawing two pinions, white as wings of swan,
From thy strong shoulders, to amaze the place
With holier light! that thou to woman's claim,
And man's, might'st join beside the angel's grace
Of a pure genius sanctified from blame,—
Till child and maiden pressed to thine embrace,
To kiss upon thy lips a stainless fame.

A RECOGNITION.

True genius, but true woman! dost deny
Thy woman's nature with a manly scorn,
And break away the gauds and armlets worn
By weaker women in captivity?
Ah, vain denial! that revolted cry
Is sobbed in by a woman's voice forlorn!—
Thy woman's hair, my sister, all unshorn,
Floats back dishevelled strength in agony,
Disproving thy man's name! and while before
The world thou burnest in a poet-fire
We see thy woman-heart beat evermore
Through the large flame. Beat purer, heart, and
higher,
Till God unsex thee on the heavenly shore,
Where unincarnate spirits purely aspire.

THE PRISONER.

I COUNT the dismal time by months and years,
Since last I felt the green sward under foot,
And the great breath of all things summer-mute
Met mine upon my lips. Now earth appears
As strange to me as dreams of distant spheres,
Or thoughts of Heaven we weep at. Nature's lute
Sounds on behind this door so closely shut,
A strange, wild music to the prisoner's ears,
Dilated by the distance, till the brain
Grows dim with fancies which it feels too fine,
While ever, with a visionary pain,
Past the precluded senses, sweep and shine
Streams, forests, glades,—and many a golden train
Of sunlit hills, transfigured to Divine.

INSUFFICIENCY.

WHEN I attain to utter forth in verse
Some inward thought, my soul throbs audibly
Along my pulses, yearning to be free
And something farther, fuller, higher, rehearse,
To the individual, true, and the universe,
In consummation of right harmony.
But, like a wind-exposed, distorted tree,
We are blown against for ever by the curse
Which breathes through nature. Oh, the world is
weak—
The effluence of each is false to all,
And what we best conceive, we fail to speak.
Wait, soul, until thine ashen garments fall,
And then resume thy broken strains, and seek
Fit peroration, without let or thrall.

TWO SKETCHES.

H. B.

The shadow of her face upon the wall
May take your memory to the perfect Greek.
But when you front her, you would call the cheek
Too full, sir, for your models, if withal
That bloom it wears could leave you critical,
And that smile reaching toward the rosy streak;
For one who smiles so, has no need to speak
To lead your thoughts along, as steed to stall.
A smile that turns the sunny side o' the heart
On all the world, as if herself did win
By what she lavished on an open mart!
Let no man call the liberal sweetness sin,—
For friends may whisper, as they stand apart,
'Methinks there's still some warmer place within.'

A. B.

Her azure eyes, dark lashes hold in fee;
Her fair superfluous ringlets, without check,
Drop after one another down her neck,
As many to each cheek as you might see
Green leaves to a wild rose! this sign outwardly,
And a like woman-covering seems to deck
Her inner nature. For she will not fleck
World's sunshine with a finger. Sympathy
Must call her in Love's name! and then, I know,
She rises up, and brightens as she should,
And lights her smile for comfort, and is slow
In nothing of high-hearted fortitude.
To smell this flower, come near it! such can grow
In that sole garden where Christ's brow dropt blood.

MOUNTAINEER AND POET.

The simple goatherd, between Alp and sky,
Seeing his shadow, in that awful tryst,
Dilated to a giant's on the mist,
Esteems not his own stature larger by
The apparent image, but more patiently
Strikes his staff down beneath his clenching fist,
While the snow-mountains lift their amethyst
And sapphire crowns of splendour, far and nigh,
Into the air around him. Learn from hence
Meek morals, all ye poets, that pursue
Your way still onward, up to eminence!
Ye are not great, because creation drew
Large revelations round your earliest sense,
Nor bright, because God's glory shines for you.

THE POET.

The poet hath the child's sight in his breast,
And sees all *new*. What oftenest he has viewed,
He views with the first glory. Fair and good
Pall never on him, at the fairest, best,
But stand before him holy and undressed
In week-day false conventions, such as would
Drag other men down from the altitude
Of primal types, too early dispossessed.
Why, God would tire of all his heavens, as soon
As thou, O godlike, childlike poet, didst,
Of daily and nightly sights of sun and moon!
And therefore hath He set thee in the midst,
Where men may hear thy wonder's ceaseless tune,
And praise his world for ever, as thou bidst.

HIRAM POWERS' GREEK SLAVE.

They say Ideal beauty cannot enter
The house of anguish. On the threshold stands
An alien Image with enshackled hands,
Called the Greek Slave! as if the artist meant her
(That passionless perfection which he lent her,
Shadowed not darkened where the sill expands)
To, so, confront man's crimes in different lands
With man's ideal sense. Pierce to the centre,
Art's fiery finger!—and break up ere long
The serfdom of this world! appeal, fair stone,
From God's pure heights of beauty against man's wrong!
Catch up in thy divine face, not alone
East griefs but west,—and strike and shame the strong,
By thunders of white silence, overthrown.

LIFE.

Each creature holds an insular point in space;
Yet what man stirs a finger, breathes a sound,
But all the multitudinous beings round
In all the countless worlds, with time and place
For their conditions, down to the central base,
Thrill, haply, in vibration and rebound,
Life answering life across the vast profound,
In full antiphony, by a common grace?
I think, this sudden joyaunce which illumes
A child's mouth sleeping, unaware may run
From some soul newly loosened from earth's tombs.
I think, this passionate sigh, which half-begun
I stifle back, may reach and stir the plumes
Of God's calm angel standing in the sun.

LOVE.

We cannot live, except thus mutually
We alternate, aware or unaware,
The reflex act of life; and when we bear
Our virtue outward most impulsively,
Most full of invocation, and to be
Most instantly compellant, certes, there
We live most life, whoever breathes most air,
And counts his dying years by sun and sea.
But when a soul, by choice and conscience, doth
Throw out her full force on another soul,
The conscience and the concentration both
Make mere life, Love. For Life in perfect whole
And aim consummated, is Love in sooth,
As nature's magnet-heat rounds pole with pole.

HEAVEN AND EARTH.

'And there was silence in heaven for the space of half-an-hour.'
Revelation.

God, who, with thunders and great voices kept
Beneath thy throne, and stars most silver-paced
Along the inferior gyres, and open-faced
Melodious angels round,—canst intercept
Music with music,—yet, at will, hast swept
All back, all back, (said he in Patmos placed)
To fill the heavens with silence of the waste
Which lasted half-an-hour!—lo, I who have wept
All day and night, beseech Thee by my tears,
And by that dread response of curse and groan
Men alternate across these hemispheres,
Vouchsafe us such a half-hour's hush alone,
In compensation for our stormy years!
As heaven has paused from song, let earth, from moan.

THE PROSPECT.

Methinks we do as fretful children do,
Leaning their faces on the window-pane
To sigh the glass dim with their own breath's stain,
And shut the sky and landscape from their view.
And thus, alas! since God the maker drew
A mystic separation 'twixt those twain,
The life beyond us, and our souls in pain,
We miss the prospect which we are called unto
By grief we are fools to use. Be still and strong,
O man, my brother! hold thy sobbing breath,
And keep thy soul's large window pure from wrong,—
That so, as life's appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear to watch along
The sunset consummation-lights of death.

HUGH STUART BOYD.

HIS BLINDNESS.

God would not let the spheric Lights accost
This God-loved man, and bade the earth stand off
With all her beckoning hills, whose golden stuff
Under the feet of the royal sun is crossed.
Yet such things were to him not wholly lost,—
Permitted, with his wandering eyes light-proof,
To catch fair visions, rendered full enough
By many a ministrant accomplished ghost,—
Still seeing, to sounds of softly-turned book-leaves,
Sappho's crown-rose, and Meleager's spring,
And Gregory's starlight on Greek-burnished eves!
Till Sensuous and Unsensuous seemed one thing,
Viewed from one level,—earth's reapers at the sheaves
Scarce plainer than Heaven's angels on the wing!

HUGH STUART BOYD.*

HIS DEATH, 1848.

Beloved friend, who living many years
With sightless eyes raised vainly to the sun,
Didst learn to keep thy patient soul in tune
To visible nature's elemental cheers!
God has not caught thee to new hemispheres
Because thou wast aweary of this one;—
I think thine angel's patience first was done,
And that he spake out with celestial tears,
'Is it enough, dear God? then lighten so
This soul that smiles in darkness!'
Stedfast friend,
Who never didst my heart or life misknow,
Nor either's faults too keenly apprehend,
How can I wonder when I see thee go
To join the Dead found faithful to the end?

HUGH STUART BOYD.

LEGACIES.

Three gifts the Dying left me,—Æschylus
And Gregory Nazianzen, and a clock,
Chiming the gradual hours out like a flock
Of stars whose motion is melodious.

* To whom was inscribed, in grateful affection, my poem of 'Cyprus Wine.' There comes a moment in life when even gratitude and affection turn to pain as they do now with me. This excellent and learned man, enthusiastic for the good and the beautiful, and one of the most simple and upright of human beings, passed out of his long darkness through death in the summer of 1848, Dr. Adam Clarke's daughter and biographer, Mrs. Smith, (happier, in this than the absent) fulfilling a doubly filial duty as she sate by the death-bed of her father's friend and hers.

The books were those I used to read from, thus
Assisting my dear teacher's soul to unlock
The darkness of his eyes. Now, mine they mock,
Blinded in turn, by tears! now, murmurous
Sad echoes of my young voice, years agone
Entoning from these leaves the Grecian phrase,
Return and choke my utterance. Books, lie down
In silence on the shelf there, within gaze;
And thou, clock, striking the hour's pulses on,
Chime in the day which ends these parting days!

THE LOST BOWER.

I.

In the pleasant orchard closes,
'God bless all our gains,' say we;
But 'May God bless all our losses,'
Better suits with our degree.
Listen gentle—ay, and simple! listen children on the knee!

II.

Green the land is where my daily
Steps in jocund childhood played,
Dimpled close with hill and valley,
Dappled very close with shade;
Summer-snow of apple blossoms running up from glade to glade.

III.

There is one hill I see nearer
In my vision of the rest;

And a little wood seems clearer
As it climbeth from the west,
Sideway from the tree-locked valley, to the airy upland crest.

IV.

Small the wood is, green with hazels,
And, completing the ascent,
Where the wind blows and sun dazzles
Thrills in leafy tremblement,
Like a heart that, after climbing, beateth quickly through content.

V.

Not a step the wood advances
O'er the open hill-top's bound.
There, in green arrest, the branches
See their image on the ground:
You may walk beneath them smiling, glad with sight and glad with sound.

VI.

For you harken on your right hand,
How the birds do leap and call
In the greenwood, out of sight and
Out of reach and fear of all;
And the squirrels crack the filberts through their cheerful madrigal.

VII.

On your left, the sheep are cropping
The slant grass and daisies pale,
And five apple-trees stand dropping
Separate shadows toward the vale,
Over which in choral silence, the hills look you their 'All hail!'

VIII.

Far out, kindled by each other,
Shining hills on hills arise,
Close as brother leans to brother
When they press beneath the eyes
Of some father praying blessings from the gifts of paradise.

IX.

While beyond, above them mounted,
And above their woods alsò,
Malvern hills, for mountains counted
Not unduly, loom a-row—
Keepers of Piers Plowman's visions through the sunshine and the snow.*

X.

Yet, in childhood, little prized I
That fair walk and far survey.
'Twas a straight walk unadvised by
The least mischief worth a nay;
Up and down—as dull as grammar on the eve of holiday.

XI.

But the wood, all close and clenching
Bough in bough and root in root,—
No more sky (for overbranching)
At your head than at your foot,—
Oh, the wood drew me within it, by a glamour past dispute.

* The Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are the scene of Langlande's visions, and thus present the earliest classic ground of English poetry.

XII.

Few and broken paths showed through it,
Where the sheep had tried to run,—
Forced with snowy wool to strew it
Round the thickets, when anon
They, with silly thorn-pricked noses, bleated back into the sun.

XIII.

But my childish heart beat stronger
Than those thickets dared to grow:
I could pierce them! *I* could longer
Travel on, methought, than so.
Sheep for sheep-paths! braver children climb and creep where they would go.

XIV.

And the poets wander, said I,
Over places all as rude.
Bold Rinaldo's lovely lady
Sate to meet him in a wood.
Rosalinda, like a fountain, laughed out pure with solitude.

XV.

And if Chaucer had not travelled
Through a forest by a well,
He had never dreamt nor marvelled
At those ladies fair and fell
Who lived smiling without loving in their island-citadel.

XVI.

Thus I thought of the old singers,
And took courage from their song,

Till my little struggling fingers
Tore asunder gyve and thong
Of the brambles which entrapped me, and the barrier branches strong.

XVII.

On a day, such pastime keeping,
With a fawn's heart debonair,
Under-crawling, overleaping
Thorns that prick and boughs that bear,
I stood suddenly astonied—I was gladdened unaware.

XVIII.

From the place I stood in, floated
Back the covert dim and close,
And the open ground was coated
Carpet-smooth with grass and moss,
And the blue-bell's purple presence signed it worthily across.

XIX.

Here a linden-tree stood, brightning
All adown its silver rind;
For as some trees draw the lightning,
So this tree, unto my mind,
Drew to earth the blessed sunshine from the sky where it was shrined.

XX.

Tall the linden-tree, and near it
An old hawthorn also grew;
And wood-ivy like a spirit
Hovered dimly round the two,
Shaping thence that bower of beauty which I sing of thus to you.

XXI.

'Twas a bower for garden fitter
Than for any woodland wide.
Though a fresh and dewy glitter
Struck it through from side to side,
Shaped and shaven was the freshness, as by garden-cunning plied.

XXII.

Oh, a lady might have come there,
Hooded fairly like her hawk,
With a book or lute in summer,
And a hope of sweeter talk—
Listening less to her own music than for footsteps on the walk.

XXIII.

But that bower appeared a marvel
In the wildness of the place;
With such seeming art and travail,
Finely fixed and fitted was
Leaf to leaf, the dark-green ivy, to the summit from the base.

XXIV.

And the ivy veined and glossy
Was enwrought with eglantine;
And the wild hop fibred closely,
And the large-leaved columbine,
Arch of door and window mullion, did right sylvanly entwine.

XXV.

Rose-trees either side the door were
Growing lithe and growing tall,

Each one set a summer warder
For the keeping of the hall,—
With a red rose and a white rose, leaning, nodding at the wall.

XXVI.

As I entered—mosses hushing
Stole all noises from my foot;
And a green elastic cushion,
Clasped within the linden's root,
Took me in a chair of silence very rare and absolute.

XXVII.

All the floor was paved with glory,
Greenly, silently inlaid,
(Through quick motions made before me)
With fair counterparts in shade
Of the fair serrated ivy-leaves which slanted overhead.

XXVIII.

'Is such pavement in a palace?'
So I questioned in my thought.
The sun, shining through the chalice
Of the red rose hung without,
Threw within a red libation, like an answer to my doubt.

XXIX.

At the same time, on the linen
Of my childish lap there fell
Two white may-leaves, downward winning
Through the ceiling's miracle,
From a blossom, like an angel, out of sight yet blessing well.

XXX.

Down to floor and up to ceiling
Quick I turned my childish face,
With an innocent appealing
For the secret of the place
To the trees, which surely knew it, in partaking of the grace.

XXXI.

Where's no foot of human creature,
How could reach a human hand?
And if this be work of nature,
Why has nature turned so bland,
Breaking off from other wild work? It was hard to understand.

XXXII.

Was she weary of rough-doing,—
Of the bramble and the thorn?
Did she pause in tender rueing
Here of all her sylvan scorn?
Or, in mock of art's deceiving, was the sudden mildness worn?

XXXIII.

Or could this same bower (I fancied)
Be the work of Dryad strong,
Who, surviving all that chanced
In the world's old pagan wrong,
Lay hid, feeling in the woodland on the last true poet's song?

XXXIV.

Or was this the house of fairies,
Left, because of the rough ways,

Unassoiled by Ave Marys
Which the passing pilgrim prays,
And beyond St. Catherine's chiming on the blessed Sabbath days?

XXXV.

So, young muser, I sate listening
To my fancy's wildest word.
On a sudden, through the glistening
Leaves around, a little stirred,
Came a sound, a sense of music, which was rather felt than heard.

XXXVI.

Softly, finely, it inwound me;
From the world it shut me in,—
Like a fountain, falling round me,
Which with silver waters thin
Clips a little water Naiad sitting smilingly within.

XXXVII.

Whence the music came, who knoweth?
I know nothing. But indeed
Pan or Faunus never bloweth
So much sweetness from a reed
Which has sucked the milk of waters at the oldest riverhead.

XXXVIII.

Never lark the sun can waken
With such sweetness! when the lark,
The high planets overtaking
In the half-evanished Dark,
Casts his singing to their singing, like an arrow to the mark.

XXXIX.

Never nightingale so singeth.
Oh, she leans on thorny tree,
And her poet-song she flingeth
Over pain to victory!
Yet she never sings such music,—or she sings it not to me.

XL.

Never blackbirds, never thrushes,
Nor small finches sing as sweet,
When the sun strikes through the bushes
To their crimson clinging feet,
And their pretty eyes look sideways to the summer heavens complete.

XLI.

If it *were* a bird, it seemèd,
Most like Chaucer's, which, in sooth,
He of green and azure dreamèd,
While it sate in spirit-ruth
On that bier of a crowned lady, singing nigh her silent mouth.

XLII.

If it *were* a bird!—ah, sceptic,
Give me 'yea' or give me 'nay'—
Though my soul were nympholeptic,
As I heard that virëlay,
You may stoop your pride to pardon, for my sin is far away.

XLIII.

I rose up in exaltation
And an inward trembling heat,

And (it seemed) in geste of passion
Dropped the music to my feet
Like a garment rustling downwards!—such a silence followed it.

XLIV.

Heart and head beat through the quiet
Full and heavily, though slower.
In the song, I think, and by it,
Mystic Presences of power
Had up-snatched me to the Timeless, then returned me to the Hour.

XLV.

In a child-abstraction lifted,
Straightway from the bower I past,
Foot and soul being dimly drifted
Through the greenwood, till, at last,
In the hill-top's open sunshine I all consciously was cast.

XLVI.

Face to face with the true mountains
I stood silently and still,
Drawing strength from fancy's dauntings,
From the air about the hill,
And from Nature's open mercies, and most debonair goodwill.

XLVII.

Oh, the golden-hearted daisies
Witnessed there, before my youth,
To the truth of things with praises
Of the beauty of the truth,
And I woke to Nature's real, laughing joyfully for both.

XLVIII.

And I said within me, laughing,
I have found a bower to-day,
A green lusus—fashioned half in
Chance, and half in Nature's play—
And a little bird sings nigh it, I will nevermore missay.

XLIX.

Henceforth, *I* will be the fairy
Of this bower not built by one;
I will go there, sad or merry,
With each morning's benison,
And the bird shall be my harper in the dream-hall I have won.

L.

So I said. But the next morning,
(—Child, look up into my face—
'Ware, oh sceptic, of your scorning!
This is truth in its pure grace!)
The next morning, all had vanished, or my wandering missed the place.

LI.

Bring an oath most sylvan holy,
And upon it swear me true—
By the wind-bells swinging slowly
Their mute curfews in the dew,
By the advent of the snow-drop, by the rosemary and rue,—

LII.

I affirm by all or any,
Let the cause be charm or chance,

That my wandering searches many
Missed the bower of my romance—
That I nevermore, upon it, turned my mortal countenance.

LIII.

I affirm that, since I lost it,
Never bower has seemed so fair;
Never Garden-creeper crossed it,
With so deft and brave an air—
Never bird sung in the summer, as I saw and heard them there.

LIV.

Day by day, with new desire,
Toward my wood I ran in faith,
Under leaf and over brier,
Through the thickets, out of breath—
Like the prince who rescued Beauty from the sleep as long as death.

LV.

But his sword of mettle clashed
And his arm smote strong, I ween,
And her dreaming spirit flashed
Through her body's fair white screen,
And the light thereof might guide him up the cedar alleys green.

LVI.

But for me, I saw no splendour—
All my sword was my child-heart;
And the wood refused surrender
Of that bower it held apart,
Safe as Œdipus's grave-place, 'mid Colone's olive swart.

LVII.

As Aladdin sought the basements
His fair palace rose upon,
And the four-and-twenty casements
Which gave answers to the sun;
So, in wilderment of gazing I looked up, and I looked down.

LVIII.

Years have vanished since as wholly
As the little bower did then;
And you call it tender folly
That such thoughts should come again?
Ah, I cannot change this sighing for your smiling, brother men!

LIX.

For this loss it did prefigure
Other loss of better good,
When my soul, in spirit-vigour,
And in ripened womanhood,
Fell from visions of more beauty than an arbour in a wood.

LX.

I have lost—oh, many a pleasure,
Many a hope, and many a power—
Studious health, and merry leisure,
The first dew on the first flower!
But the first of all my losses was the losing of the bower.

LXI.

I have lost the dream of Doing,
And the other dream of Done,

The first spring in the pursuing,
The first pride in the Begun,—
First recoil from incompletion, in the face of what is won—

LXII.

Exaltations in the far light
Where some cottage only is;
Mild dejections in the starlight,
Which the sadder-hearted miss;
And the child-cheek blushing scarlet for the very shame of bliss.

LXIII.

I have lost the sound child-sleeping
Which the thunder could not break;
Something too of the strong leaping
Of the staglike heart awake,
Which the pale is low for keeping in the road it ought to take.

LXIV.

Some respect to social fictions
Has been also lost by me;
And some generous genuflexions,
Which my spirit offered free
To the pleasant old conventions of our false humanity.

LXV.

All my losses did I tell you,
Ye, perchance, would look away;—
Ye would answer me, 'Farewell! you
Make sad company to-day,
And your tears are falling faster than the bitter words you say.'

LXVI.

For God placed me like a dial
In the open ground with power,
And my heart had for its trial,
All the sun and all the shower!
And I suffered many losses,—and my first was of the bower.

LXVII.

Laugh you? If that loss of mine be
Of no heavy-seeming weight—
When the cone falls from the pine-tree,
The young children laugh thereat;
Yet the wind that struck it, riseth, and the tempest shall be great.

LXVIII.

One who knew me in my childhood
In the glamour and the game,
Looking on me long and mild, would
Never know me for the same.
Come, unchanging recollections, were those changes overcame.

LXIX.

By this couch I weakly lie on,
While I count my memories,—
Through the fingers which, still sighing,
I press closely on mine eyes,—
Clear as once beneath the sunshine, I behold the bower arise.

LXX.

Springs the linden-tree as greenly,
Stroked with light adown its rind;

And the ivy-leaves serenely
Each in either intertwined;
And the rose-trees at the doorway, they have neither grown nor pined.

LXXI.

From those overblown faint roses
Not a leaf appeareth shed,
And that little bud discloses
Not a thorn's-breadth more of red
For the winters and the summers which have passed me overhead.

LXXII.

And that music overfloweth,
Sudden sweet, the sylvan caves.
Thrush or nightingale—who knoweth?
Fay or Faunus—who believes?
But my heart still trembles in me, to the trembling of the leaves.

LXXIII.

Is the bower lost, then? who sayeth
That the bower indeed is lost?
Hark! my spirit in it prayeth
Through the sunshine and the frost,—
And the prayer preserves it greenly, to the last and uttermost.

LXXIV.

Till another open for me
In God's Eden-land unknown,
With an angel at the doorway,
White with gazing at His Throne,
And a saint's voice in the palm-trees, singing—'All is lost . . . and *won*!'

A SONG AGAINST SINGING.

TO E. J. H.

I.

They bid me sing to thee,
Thou golden-haired and silver-voicéd child,—
With lips by no worse sigh than sleep's defiled,
With eyes unknowing how tears dim the sight,
And feet all trembling at the new delight
Treaders of earth to be!

II.

Ah no! the lark may bring
A song to thee from out the morning cloud,
The merry river from its lilies bowed,
The brisk rain from the trees, the lucky wind,
That half doth make its music, half doth find,—
But *I*—I may not sing.

III.

How could I think it right,
New-comer on our earth as, Sweet, thou art,
To bring a verse from out an human heart
Made heavy with accumulated tears,
And cross with such amount of weary years
Thy day-sum of delight?

IV.

Even if the verse were said,
Thou, who wouldst clap thy tiny hands to hear
The wind or rain, gay bird or river clear,

Wouldst, at that sound of sad humanities,
Upturn thy bright uncomprehending eyes
And bid me play instead.

V.

Therefore no song of mine,—
But prayer in place of singing; prayer that would
Commend thee to the new-creating God,
Whose gift is childhood's heart without its stain
Of weakness, ignorance, and changing vain—
That gift of God be thine!

VI.

So wilt thou aye be young,
In lovelier childhood than thy shining brow
And pretty winning accents make thee now.
Yea, sweeter than this scarce articulate sound
(How sweet!) of 'father,' 'mother,' shall be found
The ABBA on thy tongue.

VII.

And so, as years shall chase
Each other's shadows, thou wilt less resemble
Thy fellows of the earth who toil and tremble,
Than him thou seest not, thine angel bold
Yet meek, whose ever-lifted eyes behold
The Ever-loving's face.

WINE OF CYPRUS.

GIVEN TO ME BY H. S. BOYD, AUTHOR OF "SELECT PASSAGES FROM THE GREEK FATHERS," ETC., TO WHOM THESE STANZAS ARE ADDRESSED.

I.

If old Bacchus were the speaker
He would tell you with a sigh,
Of the Cyprus in this beaker
I am sipping like a fly,—
Like a fly or gnat on Ida
At the hour of goblet-pledge,
By queen Juno brushed aside, a
Full white arm-sweep, from the edge.

II.

Sooth, the drinking should be ampler
When the drink is so divine,
And some deep-mouthed Greek exemplar
Would become your Cyprus wine.
Cyclop's mouth might plunge aright in,
While his one eye over-leered—
Nor too large were mouth of Titan,
Drinking rivers down his beard.

III.

Pan might dip his head so deep in,
That his ears alone pricked out,
Fauns around him, pressing, leaping,
Each one pointing to his throat:

While the Naiads, like Bacchantes,
Wild, with urns thrown out to waste,
Cry,—'O earth, that thou wouldst grant us
Springs to keep, of such a taste!'

IV.

But for me, I am not worthy
After gods and Greeks to drink,
And my lips are pale and earthy
To go bathing from this brink.
Since you heard them speak the last time,
They have faded from their blooms,
And the laughter of my pastime
Has learnt silence at the tombs.

V.

Ah, my friend! the antique drinkers
Crowned the cup and crowned the brow.
Can I answer the old thinkers
In the forms they thought of, now?
Who will fetch from garden-closes
Some new garlands while I speak,
That the forehead, crowned with roses,
May strike scarlet down the cheek?

VI.

Do not mock me! with my mortal,
Suits no wreath again, indeed.
I am sad-voiced as the turtle
Which Anacreon used to feed.
Yet as that same bird demurely
Wet her beak in cup of his,
So, without a garland, surely
I may touch the brim of this.

VII.

Go,—let others praise the Chian!—
This is soft as Muses' string,
This is tawny as Rhea's lion,
This is rapid as his spring.
Bright as Paphia's eyes e'er met us,
Light as ever trod her feet!
And the brown bees of Hymettus
Make their honey not so sweet.

VIII.

Very copious are my praises,
Though I sip it like a fly!—
Ah—but, sipping,—times and places
Change before me suddenly.
As Ulysses' old libation
Drew the ghosts from every part,
So your Cyprus wine, dear Grecian,
Stirs the Hades of my heart.

IX.

And I think of those long mornings
Which my thought goes far to seek,
When, betwixt the folio's turnings,
Solemn flowed the rhythmic Greek.
Past the pane the mountain spreading,
Swept the sheep-bell's tinkling noise,
While a girlish voice was reading,
Somewhat low for αι s and οι s.

X.

Then, what golden hours were for us!—
While we sate together there,
How the white vests of the chorus
Seemed to wave up a live air!

How the cothurns trod majestic
Down the deep iambic lines,
And the rolling anapæstic
Curled like vapour over shrines!

XI.

Oh, our Æschylus, the thunderous!
How he drove the bolted breath
Through the cloud, to wedge it ponderous
In the gnarlèd oak beneath.
Oh, our Sophocles, the royal,
Who was born to monarch's place,
And who made the whole world loyal,
Less by kingly power than grace.

XII.

Our Euripides, the human,
With his droppings of warm tears,
And his touches of things common
Till they rose to touch the spheres!
Our Theocritus, our Bion,
And our Pindar's shining goals!—
These were cup-bearers undying,
Of the wine that's meant for souls.

XIII.

And my Plato, the divine one,
If men know the gods aright
By their motions as they shine on
With a glorious trail of light!—
And your noble Christian bishops,
Who mouthed grandly the last Greek!
Though the sponges on their hyssops
Were distent with wine—too weak.

XIV.

Yet, your Chrysostom, you praised him
As a liberal mouth of gold;
And your Basil, you upraised him
To the height of speakers old.
And we both praised Heliodorus
For his secret of pure lies,—
Who forged first his linkèd stories
In the heat of lady's eyes.

XV.

And we both praised your Synesius
For the fire shot up his odes,
Though the Church was scarce propitious
As he whistled dogs and gods.
And we both praised Nazianzen
For the fervid heart and speech.
Only I eschewed his glancing
At the lyre hung out of reach.

XVI.

Do you mind that deed of Até
Which you bound me to so fast,—
Reading 'De Virginitate,'
From the first line to the last?
How I said at ending, solemn,
As I turned and looked at you,
That St. Simeon on the column
Had had somewhat less to do?

XVII.

For we sometimes gently wrangled,
Very gently, be it said,
Since our thoughts were disentangled
By no breaking of the thread!

And I charged you with extortions
On the nobler fames of old—
Ay, and sometimes thought your Porsons
Stained the purple they would fold.

XVIII.

For the rest—a mystic moaning,
Kept Cassandra at the gate,
With wild eyes the vision shone in,
And wide nostrils scenting fate.
And Prometheus, bound in passion
By brute Force to the blind stone,
Showed us looks of invocation
Turned to ocean and the sun.

XIX.

And Medea we saw burning
At her nature's planted stake:
And proud Œdipus fate-scorning
While the cloud came on to break—
While the cloud came on slow—slower,
Till he stood discrowned, resigned!—
But the reader's voice dropped lower
When the poet called him BLIND.

XX.

Ah, my gossip! you were older,
And more learned, and a man!—
Yet that shadow, the enfolder
Of your quiet eyelids, ran
Both our spirits to one level,
And I turned from hill and lea
And the summer-sun's green revel,
To your eyes that could not see.

XXI.

Now Christ bless you with the one light
Which goes shining night and day!
May the flowers which grow in sunlight
Shed their fragrance in your way!
Is it not right to remember
All your kindness, friend of mine,
When we two sate in the chamber
And the poets poured us wine?

XXII.

So, to come back to the drinking
Of this Cyprus,—it is well,
But those memories, to my thinking,
Make a better œnomel;
And whoever be the speaker,
None can murmur with a sigh,
That, in drinking from *that* beaker,
I am sipping like a fly.

A RHAPSODY OF LIFE'S PROGRESS.

'Fill all the stops of life with tuneful breath.'
POEMS ON MAN, BY CORNELIUS MATHEWS.*

I.

WE are borne into life—it is sweet it is strange.
We lie still on the knee of a mild Mystery,
Which smiles with a change!
But we doubt not of changes, we know not of spaces,
The heavens seem as near as our own mother's face is,

* A small volume, by an American poet—as remarkable in thought and manner for a vital sinewy vigour, as the right arm of Pathfinder. 1844.

And we think we could touch all the stars that we see;
And the milk of our mother is white on our mouth;
And, with small childish hands, we are turning around
The apple of Life which another has found;
It is warm with our touch, not with sun of the south,
And we count, as we turn it, the red side for four.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange evermore.

II.

Then all things look strange in the pure golden æther:
We walk through the gardens with hands linked together,
And the lilies look large as the trees;
And as loud as the birds, sing the bloom-loving bees,
And the birds sing like angels, so mystical-fine,
And the cedars are brushing the archangel's feet,
And time is eternity, love is divine,
And the world is complete.
Now, God bless the child,—father, mother, respond!
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet.

III.

Then we leap on the earth with the armour of youth,
And the earth rings again,
And we breathe out, 'O beauty,'—we cry out, 'O truth,'
And the bloom of our lips drops with wine.
And our blood runs amazed 'neath the calm hyaline,
The earth cleaves to the foot, the sun burns to the brain,—
What is this exultation? and what this despair?—
The strong pleasure is smiting the nerves into pain,

And we drop from the Fair as we climb to the Fair,
And we lie in a trance at its feet;
And the breath of an angel cold-piercing the air
Breathes fresh on our faces in swoon,
And we think him so near he is this side the sun,
And we wake to a whisper self-murmured and fond,
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

IV.

And the winds and the waters in pastoral measures
Go winding around us, with roll upon roll,
Till the soul lies within a circle of pleasures
Which hideth the soul.
And we run with the stag, and we leap with the horse,
And we swim with the fish through the broad water-course,
And we strike with the falcon and hunt with the hound,
And the joy which is in us flies out by a wound.
And we shout so aloud, 'We exult, we rejoice,'
That we lose the low moan of our brothers around.
And we shout so adeep down creation's profound,
We are deaf to God's voice.
And we bind the rose-garland on forehead and ears,
Yet we are not ashamed,
And the dew of the roses that runneth unblamed
Down our cheeks, is not taken for tears.
Help us, God, trust us, man, love us, woman! 'I hold
Thy small head in my hands, with its grapelets of gold,
Growing bright through my fingers, like altar for oath,
'Neath the vast golden spaces like witnessing faces
That watch the eternity strong in the troth—
I love thee, I leave thee,
Live for thee, die for thee!

I prove thee, deceive thee,
Undo evermore thee!
Help me, God, slay me, man!—one is mourning for both.'
And we stand up though young near the funeral-sheet
Which covers the Cæsar and old Pharamond,
And death is so nigh us, life cools from its heat.
O Life, O Beyond,
Art thou fair,—*art* thou sweet?

V.

Then we act to a purpose—we spring up erect.
We will tame the wild mouths of the wilderness-steeds,
We will plough up the deep in the ships double-decked,
We will build the great cities, and do the great deeds,
Strike the steel upon steel, strike the soul upon soul,
Strike the dole on the weal, overcoming the dole,
Let the cloud meet the cloud in a grand thunder-roll!
'While the eagle of Thought rides the tempest in scorn,
Who cares if the lightning is burning the corn?
Let us sit on the thrones
In a purple sublimity,
And grind down men's bones
To a pale unanimity.
Speed me, God!—serve me, man!—I am god over men
When I speak in my cloud, none shall answer again.
'Neath the stripe and the bond,
Lie and mourn at my feet!'—
O thou Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VI.

Then we grow into thought,—and with inward ascensions
Touch the bounds of our Being.
We lie in the dark here, swathed doubly around
With our sensual relations and social conventions.
Yet are 'ware of a sight, yet are 'ware of a sound
Beyond Hearing and Seeing,—
Are aware that a Hades rolls deep on all sides
With its infinite tides
About and above us,—until the strong arch
Of our life creaks and bends as if ready for falling,
And through the dim rolling, we hear the sweet calling
Of spirits that speak in a soft under-tongue
The sense of the mystical march.
And we cry to them softly, 'Come nearer, come nearer,
And lift up the lap of this Dark, and speak clearer,
And teach us the song that ye sung.'
And we smile in our thought if they answer or no,
For to dream of a sweetness is sweet as to know.
Wonders breathe in our face
And we ask not their name;
Love takes all the blame
Of the world's prison-place.
And we sing back the songs as we guess them, aloud;
And we send up the lark of our music that cuts
Untired through the cloud,
To beat with its wings at the lattice Heaven shuts;
Yet the angels look down and the mortals look up
As the little wings beat,
And the poet is blessed with their pity or hope.
'Twixt the heavens and the earth *can* a poet despond?
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VII.

Then we wring from our souls their applicative strength,
And bend to the cord the strong bow of our ken,
And bringing our lives to the level of others
Hold the cup we have filled, to their uses at length.
'Help me, God! love me, man! I am man among men,
And my life is a pledge
Of the ease of another's!'
From the fire and the water we drive out the steam
With a rush and a roar and the speed of a dream;
And the car without horses, the car without wings
Roars onward and flies
On its grey iron edge,
'Neath the heat of a Thought sitting still in our eyes.
And our hand knots in air, with the bridge that it flings.
Two peaks far disrupted by ocean and skies,
And, lifting a fold of the smooth-flowing Thames,
Draws under the world with its turmoils and pothers,
While the swans float on softly, untouched in their calms
By humanity's hum at the root of the springs.
And with reachings of Thought we reach down to the deeps
Of the souls of our brothers,—
We teach them full words with our slow-moving lips,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth,'—which they harken and think
And work into harmony, link upon link,
Till the silver meets round the earth gelid and dense,
Shedding sparks of electric responding intense
On the dark of eclipse.

Then we hear through the silence and glory afar,
As from shores of a star
In aphelion, the new generations that cry
Disenthralled by our voice to harmonious reply,
'God,' 'Liberty,' 'Truth!'
We are glorious forsooth—
And our name has a seat,
Though the shroud should be donned.
O Life, O Beyond,
Thou art strange, thou art sweet!

VIII.

Help me, God—help me, man! I am low, I am weak—
Death loosens my sinews and creeps in my veins.
My body is cleft by these wedges of pains
From my spirit's serene,
And I feel the externe and insensate creep in
On my organised clay.
I sob not, nor shriek,
Yet I faint fast away!
I am strong in the spirit,—deep-thoughted, clear-eyed,—
I could walk, step for step, with an angel beside,
On the heaven-heights of truth!
Oh, the soul keeps its youth,
But the body faints sore, it is tired in the race,
It sinks from the chariot ere reaching the goal,
It is weak, it is cold,
The rein drops from its hold—
It sinks back, with the death in its face.
On, chariot—on, soul,
Ye are all the more fleet—
Be alone at the goal
Of the strange and the sweet!

IX.

Love us, God, love us, man! we believe, we achieve—
Let us love, let us live,
For the acts correspond;
We are glorious—and DIE!
And again on the knee of a mild Mystery
That smiles with a change,
Here we lie.
O DEATH, O BEYOND,
Thou art sweet, thou art strange!

A LAY OF THE EARLY ROSE.

—— 'discordance that can accord.'
ROMAUNT OF THE ROSE.

A ROSE once grew within
A garden April-green,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

A white rose delicate
On a tall bough and straight.
Early comer, early comer,
Never waiting for the summer.

Her pretty gestes did win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For if I wait,' said she,
'Till time for roses be,—
For the moss-rose and the musk-rose,
Maiden-blush and royal-dusk rose,—

'What glory then for me
In such a company?—
Roses plenty, roses plenty,
And one nightingale for twenty?

'Nay, let me in,' said she,
'Before the rest are free,—
In my loneness, in my loneness,
All the fairer for that oneness.

'For I would lonely stand
Uplifting my white hand,
On a mission, on a mission,
To declare the coming vision.

'Upon which lifted sign,
What worship will be mine?
What addressing, what caressing,
And what thanks and praise and blessing!

'A windlike joy will rush
Through every tree and bush,
Bending softly in affection,
And spontaneous benediction.

'Insects, that only may
Live in a sunbright ray,
To my whiteness, to my whiteness,
Shall be drawn, as to a brightness;—

'And every moth and bee,
Approach me reverently,
Wheeling o'er me, wheeling o'er me,
Coronals of motioned glory.

'Three larks shall leave a cloud,
To my whiter beauty vowed,
Singing gladly all the moontide,
Never waiting for the suntide.

'Ten nightingales shall flee
Their woods for love of me,
Singing sadly all the suntide,
Never waiting for the moontide.

'I ween the very skies
Will look down with surprise,
When low on earth they see me
With my starry aspect dreamy.

'And earth will call her flowers
To hasten out of doors;
By their curtsies and sweet-smelling,
To give grace to my foretelling,'

So praying, did she win
South winds to let her in,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
And the fairer for that oneness.

But ah,—alas for her!
No thing did minister
To her praises, to her praises,
More than might unto a daisy's.

No tree nor bush was seen
To boast a perfect green,
Scarcely having, scarcely having
One leaf broad enough for waving.

The little flies did crawl
Along the southern wall,
Faintly shifting, faintly shifting
Wings scarce long enough for lifting.

The lark too high or low,
I ween, did miss her so,
With his nest down in the gorses,
And his song in the star-courses.

The nightingale did please
To loiter beyond seas.
Guess him in the Happy islands,
Learning music from the silence.

Only the bee, forsooth,
Came in the place of both,
Doing honour, doing honour
To the honey-dews upon her.

The skies looked coldly down
As on a royal crown;
Then with drop for drop, at leisure,
They began to rain for pleasure.

Whereat the earth did seem
To waken from a dream,
Winter-frozen, winter-frozen,
Her unquiet eyes unclosing—

Said to the Rose, 'Ha, Snow!
And art thou fallen so?
Thou, who wast enthroned stately
All along my mountains lately?

'Holloa, thou world-wide snow!
And art thou wasted so?
With a little bough to catch thee,
And a little bee to watch thee?'

—Poor Rose, to be misknown!
Would, she had ne'er been blown,
In her loneness, in her loneness,
All the sadder for that oneness!

Some word she tried to say,
Some *no* . . . . ah, wellaway!
But the passion did o'ercome her,
And the fair frail leaves dropped from her.

Dropped from her, fair and mute,
Close to a poet's foot,
Who beheld them, smiling slowly,
As at something sad yet holy,—

Said, 'Verily and thus
It chances too with *us*
Poets, singing sweetest snatches
While that deaf men keep the watches:

'Vaunting to come before
Our own age evermore,
In a loneness, in a loneness,
And the nobler for that oneness.

'Holy in voice and heart,
To high ends, set apart!
All unmated, all unmated,
Just because so consecrated.

'But if alone we be,
Where is our empery?
And if none can reach our stature,
Who can mete our lofty nature?

'What bell will yield a tone,
Swung in the air alone?
If no brazen clapper bringing,
Who can hear the chimed ringing?

'What angel, but would seem
To sensual eyes, ghost-dim?
And without assimilation,
Vain is inter-penetration.

'And thus, what can we do,
Poor rose and poet too,
Who both antedate our mission
In an unprepared season?

'Drop leaf—be silent song!
Cold things we come among.
We must warm them, we must warm them,
Ere we ever hope to charm them.

'Howbeit' (here his face
Lightened around the place,—
So to mark the outward turning
Of his spirit's inward burning)

'Something it is, to hold
In God's worlds manifold,
First revealed to creature-duty,
Some new form of his mild beauty.

'Whether that form respect
The sense or intellect,
Holy be in mood or meadow,
The Chief Beauty's sign and shadow!

'Holy, in me and thee,
Rose fallen from the tree,—
Though the world stand dumb around us,
All unable to expound us.

'Though none us deign to bless,
Blessèd are we, nathless:
Blessèd still and consecrated,
In that, rose, we were created.

'Oh, shame to poet's lays,
Sung for the dole of praise,—
Hoarsely sung upon the highway
With that *obolum da mihi!*

'Shame, shame to poet's soul
Pining for such a dole,
When Heaven-chosen to inherit
The high throne of a chief spirit!

'Sit still upon your thrones,
O ye poetic ones!
And if, sooth, the world decry you,
Let it pass unchallenged by you!

'Ye to yourselves suffice,
Without its flatteries.
Self-contentedly approve you
Unto HIM who sits above you,—

'In prayers—that upward mount
Like to a fair-sunned fount
Which, in gushing back upon you,
Hath an upper music won you.

'In faith—that still perceives
No rose can shed her leaves,
Far less, poet fall from mission,
With an unfulfilled fruition.

'In hope—that apprehends
An end beyond these ends,
And great uses rendered duly
By the meanest song sung truly.

'In thanks—for all the good
By poets understood—
For the sound of seraphs moving
Down the hidden depths of loving,—

'For sights of things away
Through fissures of the clay,
Promised things which *shall* be given
And sung over, up in Heaven.—

'For life, so lovely vain,
For death, which breaks the chain,—
For this sense of present sweetness,—
And this yearning to completeness!'

THE POET AND THE BIRD.

A FABLE.

I.

Said a people to a poet—'Go out from among us straightway!
While we are thinking earthly things, thou singest of divine.
There's a little fair brown nightingale, who, sitting in the gateway,
Makes fitter music to our ear, than any song of thine!'

II.

The poet went out weeping—the nightingale ceased chanting,
'Now, wherefore, O thou nightingale, is all thy sweetness done?'
—'I cannot sing my earthly things, the heavenly poet wanting,
Whose highest harmony includes the lowest under sun.'

III.

The poet went out weeping,—and died abroad, bereft there.
The bird flew to his grave and died amid a thousand wails.
And, when I last came by the place, I swear the music left there
Was only of the poet's song, and not the nightingale's.

THE CRY OF THE HUMAN.

I.

'THERE is no God,' the foolish saith,
But none, 'There is no sorrow,'
And nature oft, the cry of faith,
In bitter need will borrow:
Eyes, which the preacher could not school,
By wayside graves are raisèd,
And lips say, 'God be pitiful,'
Who ne'er said, 'God be praisèd.'
Be pitiful, O God!

II.

The tempest stretches from the steep
The shadow of its coming,
The beasts grow tame, and near us creep,
As help were in the human;
Yet, while the cloud-wheels roll and grind,
We spirits tremble under!—
The hills have echoes, but we find
No answer for the thunder.
Be pitiful, O God!

III.

The battle hurtles on the plains,
Earth feels new scythes upon her.
We reap our brothers for the wains,
And call the harvest . . honour;
Draw face to face, front line to line,
One image all inherit,—
Then kill, curse on, by that same sign,
Clay, clay,—and spirit, spirit.
Be pitiful, O God!

IV.

The plague runs festering through the town,
And never a bell is tolling,
And corpses, jostled 'neath the moon,
Nod to the dead-cart's rolling.
The young child calleth for the cup,
The strong man brings it weeping;
The mother from her babe looks up,
And shrieks away its sleeping.
Be pitiful, O God!

V.

The plague of gold strikes far and near,
And deep and strong it enters.
This purple chimar which we wear,
Makes madder than the centaur's:
Our thoughts grow blank, our words grow strange,
We cheer the pale gold-diggers—
Each soul is worth so much on 'Change,
And marked, like sheep, with figures.
Be pitiful, O God!

VI.

The curse of gold upon the land
The lack of bread enforces.
The rail-cars snort from strand to strand,
Like more of Death's White horses!
The rich preach 'rights' and future days,
And hear no angel scoffing,—
The poor die mute—with starving gaze
On corn-ships in the offing.
Be pitiful, O God!

VII.

We meet together at the feast,
To private mirth betake us;
We stare down in the winecup, lest
Some vacant chair should shake us.
We name delight, and pledge it round—
'It shall be ours to-morrow!'
God's seraphs, do your voices sound
As sad in naming sorrow?
Be pitiful, O God!

VIII.

We sit together, with the skies,
The stedfast skies, above us,
We look into each other's eyes,
'And how long will you love us?'—
The eyes grow dim with prophecy,
The voices, low and breathless,—
'Till death us part!'—O words, to be
Our *best*, for love the deathless!
Be pitiful, O God!

IX.

We tremble by the harmless bed
Of one loved and departed.
Our tears drop on the lips that said
Last night, 'Be stronger-hearted!'
O God,—to clasp those fingers close,
And yet to feel so lonely!—
To see a light upon such brows,
Which is the daylight only!
Be pitiful, O God!

X.

The happy children come to us,
And look up in our faces.
They ask us—Was it thus, and thus,
When we were in their places?—
We cannot speak;—we see anew
The hills we used to live in,
And feel our mother's smile press through
The kisses she is giving.
Be pitiful, O God!

XI.

We pray together at the kirk,
For mercy, mercy, solely.
Hands weary with the evil work,
We lift them to the Holy.
The corpse is calm below our knee,
Its spirit, bright before Thee—
Between them, worse than either, we—
Without the rest of glory!
Be pitiful, O God!

XII.

We leave the communing of men,
The murmur of the passions,
And live alone, to live again
With endless generations.
Are we so brave?—The sea and sky
In silence lift their mirrors,
And, glassed therein, our spirits high
Recoil from their own terrors.
Be pitiful, O God!

XIII.

We sit on hills our childhood wist,
  Woods, hamlets, streams, beholding:
The sun strikes through the farthest mist,
  The city's spire to golden.
The city's golden spire it was,
  When hope and health were strongest,
But now it is the churchyard grass
  We look upon the longest.
Be pitiful, O God!

XIV.

And soon all vision waxeth dull—
  Men whisper, 'He is dying:'
We cry no more 'Be pitiful!'
  We have no strength for crying.
No strength, no need. Then, soul of mine,
  Look up and triumph rather—
Lo, in the depth of God's Divine
  The Son adjures the Father,
Be pitiful, O God!

A PORTRAIT.

'One name is Elizabeth.'—Ben Jonson.

I will paint her as I see her.
Ten times have the lilies blown,
Since she looked upon the sun.

And her face is lily-clear,
Lily-shaped, and dropped in duty
To the law of its own beauty.

Oval cheeks encoloured faintly,
Which a trail of golden hair
Keeps from fading off to air:

And a forehead fair and saintly,
Which two blue eyes undershine,
Like meek prayers before a shrine.

Face and figure of a child,—
Though too calm, you think, and tender,
For the childhood you would lend her.

Yet child-simple, undefiled,
Frank, obedient,—waiting still
On the turnings of your will.

Moving light, as all your things,
As young birds, or early wheat,
When the wind blows over it.

Only, free from flutterings
Of loud mirth that scorneth measure—
Taking love for her chief pleasure.

Choosing pleasures, for the rest,
Which come softly—just as she,
When she nestles at your knee.

Quiet talk she liketh best,
In a bower of gentle looks—
Watering flowers, or reading books.

And her voice, it murmurs lowly,
As a silver stream may run,
Which yet feels, you feel, the sun.

And her smile, it seems half holy,
As if drawn from thoughts more far
Than our common jestings are.

And if any poet knew her,
He would sing of her with falls
Used in lovely madrigals.

And if any painter drew her,
He would paint her unaware
With a halo round the hair.

And if reader read the poem,
He would whisper—'You have done a
Consecrated little Una.'

And a dreamer (did you show him
That same picture) would exclaim,
'Tis my angel, with a name!'

And a stranger, when he sees her
In the street even—smileth stilly,
Just as you would at a lily.

And all voices that address her,
Soften, sleeken every word,
As if speaking to a bird.

And all fancies yearn to cover
The hard earth whereon she passes,
With the thymy scented grasses.

And all hearts do pray, 'God love her!'—
Ay, and always, in good sooth,
We may all be sure He doth.

CONFESSIONS.

I.

Face to face in my chamber, my silent chamber, I saw her.
God and she and I only, . . there, I sate down to draw her
Soul through the clefts of confession . . . Speak, I am holding thee fast,
As the angels of resurrection shall do it at the last.
'My cup is blood-red
With my sin,' she said,
'And I pour it out to the bitter lees,
As if the angels of judgment stood over me strong at the last,
Or as thou wert as these!'

II.

When God smote His hands together, and struck
out thy soul as a spark
Into the organised glory of things, from deeps of
the dark,—
Say, didst thou shine, didst thou burn, didst thou
honour the power in the form,
As the star does at night, or the fire-fly, or even the
little ground-worm?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'For my seed-light shed
Has smouldered away from His first decrees!
The cypress praiseth the fire-fly, the ground-leaf
praiseth the worm,—
I am viler than these!'

III.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not trample
thee straight
With His wild rains beating and drenching thy light
found inadequate;
When He only sent thee the north-winds, a little
searching and chill,
To quicken thy flame . . didst thou kindle and flash
to the heights of His will?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'Unquickened, unspread
My fire dropt down, and I wept on my knees!
I only said of His winds of the north as I shrank
from their chill, . .
What delight is in these?'

IV.

When God on that sin had pity, and did not meet
it as such,
But tempered the wind to thy uses, and softened
the world to thy touch,
At least thou wast moved in thy soul, though unable
to prove it afar,
Thou couldst carry thy light like a jewel, not giving
it out like a star?
'I have sinned,' she said,
'And not merited
The gift He gives, by the grace He sees!
The mine-cave praiseth the jewel, the hill-side
praiseth the star;
I am viler than these.'

V.

Then I cried aloud in my passion, . . Unthankful
and impotent creature,
To throw up thy scorn unto God through the rents
in thy beggarly nature!
If He, the all-giving and loving, is served so unduly,
what then
Hast thou done to the weak and the false, and the
changing, . . thy fellows of men?
'I have *loved*,' she said,
(Words bowing her head
As the wind the wet acacia-trees!)
'I saw God sitting above me,—but I . . I sate among
men,
And I have loved these.'

VI.

Again with a lifted voice, like a choral trumpet that takes
The lowest note of a viol that trembles, and triumphing breaks
On the air with it solemn and clear,—'Behold! I have sinned not in this!
Where I loved, I have loved much and well,—I have verily loved not amiss.
Let the living,' she said;
'Enquire of the Dead,
In the house of the pale-fronted Images:
My own true dead will answer for me, that I have not loved amiss
In my love for all these.

VII.

'The least touch of their hands in the morning, I keep it by day and by night.
Their least step on the stair, at the door, still throbs through me, if ever so light.
Their least gift, which they left to my childhood, far off, in the long-ago years,
Is now turned from a toy to a relic, and seen through the crystals of tears.
Dig the snow,' she said,
'For my churchyard bed,
Yet I, as I sleep, shall not fear to freeze,
If one only of these my beloveds, shall love me with heart-warm tears,
As I have loved these!

VIII.

'If I angered any among them, from thenceforth
my own life was sore.
If I fell by chance from their presence, I clung to
their memory more.
Their tender I often felt holy, their bitter I some-
times called sweet;
And whenever their heart has refused me, I fell
down straight at their feet.
I have loved,' she said,—
'Man is weak, God is dread,
Yet the weak man dies with his spirit at ease,
Having poured such an unguent of love but once on
the Saviour's feet,
As I lavished for these.'

IX.

Go, I cried, thou hast chosen the Human, and left
the Divine!
Then, at least, have the Human shared with thee
their wild-berry wine?
Have they loved back thy love, and when strangers
approached thee with blame,
Have they covered thy fault with their kisses, and
loved thee the same?
But she shrunk and said,
'God, over my head
Must sweep in the wrath of his judgment seas,
If *He* shall deal with me sinning, but only indeed
the same
And no gentler than these.'

LOVED ONCE.

I.

I CLASSED, appraising once,
Earth's lamentable sounds,—the welladay,
The jarring yea and nay,
The fall of kisses on unanswering clay,
The sobbed farewell, the welcome mournfuller,—
But all did leaven the air
With a less bitter leaven of sure despair,
Than these words—'I loved ONCE.'

II.

And who saith, 'I loved ONCE?'
Not angels,—whose clear eyes, love, love, foresee,
Love, through eternity,
And by To Love do apprehend To Be.
Not God, called LOVE, his noble crown-name, casting
A light too broad for blasting!
The great God changing not from everlasting,
Saith never, 'I loved ONCE.'

III.

Oh, never is 'Loved ONCE'
Thy word, thou Victim-Christ, misprizèd friend!
Thy cross and curse may rend,
But having loved Thou lovest to the end.
This is man's saying—man's. Too weak to move
One spherèd star above,
Man desecrates the eternal God-word Love
By his No More and Once.

IV.

How say ye, 'We loved once,'
Blasphemers? Is your earth not cold enow,
Mourners, without that snow?
Ah, friends! and would ye wrong each other so?
And could ye say of some whose love is known,
Whose prayers have met your own,
Whose tears have fallen for you, whose smiles have shone
So long,—'We loved them ONCE?'

V.

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say calm of me, sweet friends, when out of sight?
When hearts of better right
Stand in between me and your happy light?
Or when, as flowers kept too long in the shade,
Ye find my colours fade,
And all that is not love in me, decayed?
Such words—Ye loved me ONCE!

VI.

Could ye, 'We loved her once,'
Say cold of me when further put away
In earth's sepulchral clay,—
When mute the lips which deprecate to-day?
Not so! not then—least then. When life is shriven,
And death's full joy is given,—
Of those who sit and love you up in heaven,
Say not, 'We loved them once.'

VII.

Say never, ye loved ONCE.
God is too near above, the grave, beneath,

And all our moments breathe
Too quick in mysteries of life and death,
For such a word. The eternities avenge
Affections light of range.
There comes no change to justify that change,
Whatever comes—Loved ONCE!

VIII.

And yet that same word ONCE
Is humanly acceptive. Kings have said,
Shaking a discrowned head,
'We ruled once,'—dotards, 'We once taught and led.'
Cripples once danced i' the vines; and bards approved,
Were once by scornings moved:
But love strikes one hour—LOVE! those *never* loved,
Who dream that they loved ONCE.

THE HOUSE OF CLOUDS.

I.

I WOULD build a cloudy House
For my thoughts to live in,
When for earth too fancy-loose,
And too low for heaven.
Hush! I talk my dream aloud;
I build it bright to see.—
I build it on the moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee*.

II.

Cloud-walls of the morning's grey
  Faced with amber column,
Crowned with crimson cupola
  From a sunset solemn.
May-mists, for the casements, fetch,
  Pale and glimmering,
With a sunbeam hid in each,
  And a smell of spring.

III.

Build the entrance high and proud,
  Darkening and then brightening,
Of a riven thunder-cloud,
  Veinèd by the lightning.
Use one with an iris-stain
  For the door within,
Turning to a sound like rain
  As I enter in.

IV.

Build a spacious hall thereby
  Boldly, never fearing.
Use the blue place of the sky
  Which the wind is clearing;
Branched with corridors sublime,
  Flecked with winding stairs,
Such as children wish to climb,
  Following their own prayers.

V.

In the mutest of the house,
  I will have my chamber.
Silence at the door shall use
  Evening's light of amber;

Solemnising every mood,
  Softening in degree,
Turning sadness into good
  As I turn the key.

VI.

Be my chamber tapestried
  With the showers of summer,
Close, but soundless,—glorified
  When the sunbeams come here;
Wandering harpers, harping on
  Waters stringed for such,
Drawing colour, for a tune,
  With a vibrant touch.

VII.

Bring a shadow green and still
  From the chestnut forest,
Bring a purple from the hill,
  When the heat is sorest,
Spread them out from wall to wall,
  Carpet-wove around,
Whereupon the foot shall fall
  In light instead of sound.

VIII.

Bring fantastic cloudlets home
  From the noontide zenith,
Ranged for sculptures round the room,
  Named as Fancy weeneth.
Some be Junos, without eyes,
  Naiads, without sources;
Some be birds of paradise,
  Some, Olympian horses.

IX.

Bring the dews the birds shake off,
  Waking in the hedges,—
Those too, perfumed for a proof,
  From the lilies' edges.
From our England's field and moor,
  Bring them calm and white in,
Whence to form a mirror pure
  For Love's self-delighting.

X.

Bring a grey cloud from the east
  Where the lark is singing,
(Something of the song at least
  Unlost in the bringing.)
That shall be a morning chair,
  Poet-dream may sit in,
When it leans out on the air,
  Unrhymed and unwritten.

XI.

Bring the red cloud from the sun!
  While he sinketh, catch it.
That shall be a couch,—with one
  Sidelong star to watch it,—
Fit for Poet's finest thought
  At the curfew sounding;
Things unseen being nearer brought
  Than the seen, around him.

XII.

Poet's thought,—not poet's sigh,
  'Las, they come together!
Cloudy walls divide and fly,
  As in April weather!

Cupola and column proud,
Structure bright to see,
Gone! except that moonlit cloud
To which I looked with *thee.*

XIII.

Let them. Wipe such visionings
From the fancy's cartel.
Love secures some fairer things,
Dowered with his immortal.
The sun may darken, heaven be bowed,
But still unchanged shall be,—
Here, in my soul,—that moonlit cloud,
To which I looked with THEE!

A SABBATH MORNING AT SEA.

I.

THE ship went on with solemn face;
To meet the darkness on the deep,
The solemn ship went onward.
I bowed down weary in the place,
For parting tears and present sleep
Had weighed mine eyelids downward.

II.

Thick sleep which shut all dreams from me,
And kept my inner self apart
And quiet from emotion,
Then brake away and left me free,
Made conscious of a human heart
Betwixt the heaven and ocean.

III.

The new sight, the new wondrous sight!
The waters round me, turbulent,—
The skies impassive o'er me,
Calm, in a moonless, sunless light,
Half glorified by that intent
Of holding the day-glory!

IV.

Two pale thin clouds did stand upon
The meeting line of sea and sky,
With aspect still and mystic.
I think they did foresee the sun,
And rested on their prophecy
In quietude majestic,

V.

Then flushed to radiance where they stood,
Like statues by the open tomb
Of shining saints half risen.—
The sun!—he came up to be viewed,
And sky and sea made mighty room
To inaugurate the vision.

VI.

I oft had seen the dawnlight run,
As red wine, through the hills, and break
Through many a mist's inurning;
But, here, no earth profaned the sun!
Heaven, ocean, did alone partake
The sacrament of morning.

VII.

Away with thoughts fantastical!
I would be humble to my worth,
Self-guarded, as self-doubted.
Though here no earthly shadows fall,
I, joying, grieving without earth,
May desecrate without it.

VIII.

God's sabbath morning sweeps the waves;
I would not praise the pageant high
Yet miss the dedicature.
I, carried toward the sunless graves
By force of natural things,—should I
Exult in only nature?

IX.

And could I bear to sit alone
'Mid nature's fixed benignities,
While my warm pulse was moving?
Too dark thou art, O glittering sun,
Too strait ye are, capacious seas,
To satisfy the loving!

X.

It seems a better lot than so,
To sit with friends beneath the beech,
And feel them dear and dearer;
Or follow children as they go
In pretty pairs, with softened speech,
As the church-bells ring nearer.

XI.

Love me, sweet friends, this sabbath day!
The sea sings round me while ye roll
Afar the hymn unaltered,
And kneel, where once I knelt to pray,
And bless me deeper in the soul,
Because the voice has faltered.

XII.

And though this sabbath comes to me
Without the stolèd minister
Or chanting congregation,
God's Spirit brings communion, He
Who brooded soft on waters drear,
Creator on creation.

XIII.

Himself, I think, shall draw me higher,
Where keep the saints with harp and song
An endless sabbath morning,
And on that sea commixed with fire
Oft drop their eyelids, raised too long
To the full Godhead's burning.

A FLOWER IN A LETTER.

I.

My lonely chamber next the sea,
Is full of many flowers set free
By summer's earliest duty.
Dear friends upon the garden-walk
Might stop amid their fondest talk,
To pull the least in beauty.

II.

A thousand flowers—each seeming one
That learnt by gazing on the sun
To counterfeit his shining;
Within whose leaves the holy dew
That falls from heaven, has won anew
A glory in declining.

III.

Red roses, used to praises long,
Contented with the poet's song,
The nightingale's being over;
And lilies white, prepared to touch
The whitest thought, nor soil it much,
Of dreamer turned to lover.

IV.

Deep violets, you liken to
The kindest eyes that look on you,
Without a thought disloyal;

And cactuses, a queen might don,
If weary of a golden crown,
And still appear as royal.

V.

Pansies for ladies all,—(I wis
That none who wear such brooches, miss
A jewel in the mirror:)
And tulips, children love to stretch
Their fingers down, to feel in each
Its beauty's secret nearer.

VI.

Love's language may be talked with these;
To work out choicest sentences,
No blossoms can be meeter;
And, such being used in Eastern bowers,
Young maids may wonder if the flowers
Or meanings be the sweeter.

VII.

And such being strewn before a bride,
Her little foot may turn aside,
Their longer bloom decreeing,
Unless some voice's whispered sound
Should make her gaze upon the ground
Too earnestly—for seeing.

VIII.

And such being scattered on a grave,
Whoever mourneth there, may have
A type which seemeth worthy
Of that fair body hid below,
Which bloomed on earth a time ago,
Then perished as the earthy.

IX.

And such being wreathed for worldly feast
Across the brimming cup some guest
  Their rainbow colours viewing,
May feel them, with a silent start,
The covenant, his childish heart
  With nature made,—renewing.

X.

No flowers our gardened England hath,
To match with these, in bloom and breath,
  Which from the world are hiding,
In sunny Devon moist with rills,—
A nunnery of cloistered hills,
  The elements presiding.

XI.

By Loddon's stream the flowers are fair
That meet one gifted lady's care
  With prodigal rewarding,
(For Beauty is too used to run
To Mitford's bower—to want the sun
  To light her through the garden.)

XII.

But, here, all summers are comprised—
The nightly frosts shrink exorcised
  Before the priestly moonshine;
And every Wind with stolèd feet,
In wandering down the alleys sweet,
  Steps lightly on the sunshine,

XIII.

And (having promised Harpocrate
Among the nodding roses, that
No harm shall touch his daughters)
Gives quite away the rushing sound,
He dares not use upon such ground,
To ever-trickling waters.

XIV.

Yet, sun and wind! what can ye do
But make the leaves more brightly show
In posies newly gathered?
I look away from all your best,
To one poor flower unlike the rest,
A little flower half-withered.

XV.

I do not think it ever was
A pretty flower,—to make the grass
Look greener where it reddened;
And now it seems ashamed to be
Alone, in all this company,
Of aspect shrunk and saddened.

XVI.

A chamber-window was the spot
It grew in, from a garden-pot,
Among the city shadows.
If any, tending it, might seem
To smile, 'twas only in a dream
Of nature in the meadows.

XVII.

How coldly on its head did fall
The sunshine, from the city wall
  In pale refraction driven!
How sadly plashed upon its leaves
The rain-drops, losing in the eaves
  The first sweet news of heaven!

XVIII.

And those who planted, gathered it
In gamesome or in loving fit,
  And sent it as a token
Of what their city pleasures be,—
For one, in Devon by the sea
  And garden-blooms, to look on.

XIX.

But SHE, for whom the jest was meant,
With a grave passion innocent
  Receiving what was given,—
Oh, if her face she turnèd then,
Let none say 'twas to gaze again
  Upon the flowers of Devon!

XX.

Because, whatever virtue dwells
In genial skies, warm oracles
  For gardens brightly springing,—
The flower which grew beneath your eyes,
Beloved friends, to mine supplies
  A beauty worthier singing!

THE MASK.

I.

I HAVE a smiling face, she said,
I have a jest for all I meet,
I have a garland for my head
And all its flowers are sweet,—
And so you call me gay, she said.

II.

Grief taught to me this smile, she said,
And Wrong did teach this jesting bold.
These flowers were plucked from garden-bed
While a death-chime was tolled.
And what now will you say?—she said.

III.

Behind no prison-grate, she said,
Which slurs the sunshine half a mile,
Live captives so uncomforted,
As souls behind a smile.
God's pity let us pray, she said.

IV.

I know my face is bright, she said,—
Such brightness, dying suns diffuse
I bear upon my forehead shed
The sign of what I lose,—
The ending of my day, she said.

V.

If I dared leave this smile, she said,
And take a moan upon my mouth,
And tie a cypress round my head,
And let my tears run smooth,—
It were the happier way, she said.

VI.

And since that must not be, she said,
I fain your bitter world would leave.
How calmly, calmly, smile the Dead,
Who do not, therefore, grieve!
The yea of Heaven is yea, she said.

VII.

But in your bitter world, she said,
Face-joy's a costly mask to wear.
'Tis bought with pangs long nourished,
And rounded to despair.
Grief's earnest makes life's play, she said.

VIII.

Ye weep for those who weep? she said—
Ah fools! I bid you pass them by.
Go, weep for those whose hearts have bled,
What time their eyes were dry.
Whom sadder can I say? she said.

CALLS ON THE HEART.

I.

Free Heart, that singest to-day,
Like a bird on the first green spray,
Wilt thou go forth to the world,
Where the hawk hath his wing unfurled
To follow, perhaps, thy way?
Where the tamer, thine own will bind,
And, to make thee sing, will blind,
While the little hip grows for the free behind?
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No no!
'Free hearts are better so.'

II.

The world, thou hast heard it told,
Has counted its robber-gold,
And the pieces stick to the hand.
The world goes riding it fair and grand,
While the truth is bought and sold!
World-voices east, world-voices west,
They call thee, Heart, from thine early rest,
'Come hither, come hither and be our guest.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Good hearts are calmer so.'

III.

Who calleth thee, Heart? World's Strife,
With a golden heft to his knife.

World's Mirth, with a finger fine
That draws on a board in wine
Her blood-red plans of life.
World's Gain, with a brow knit down.
World's Fame, with a laurel crown,
Which rustles most as the leaves turn brown—
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Calm hearts are wiser so.'

IV.

Hast heard that Proserpina
(Once fooling) was snatched away,
To partake the dark king's seat,—
And that the tears ran fast on her feet
To think how the sun shone yesterday?
With her ankles sunken in asphodel
She wept for the roses of earth which fell
From her lap when the wild car drave to hell.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Wise hearts are warmer so.'

V.

And what is this place not seen,
Where Hearts may hide serene?
''Tis a fair still house well-kept,
'Which humble thoughts have swept,
'And holy prayers made clean.
'There, I sit with Love in the sun,
'And we two never have done
'Singing sweeter songs than are guessed by *one*.'

Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Warm hearts are fuller so.'

VI.

O Heart, O Love,—I fear
That Love may be kept too near.
Hast heard, O Heart, that tale,
How Love may be false and frail
To a heart once holden dear?
—'But this true Love of mine
'Clings fast as the clinging vine,
'And mingles pure as the grapes in wine.'
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'No, no!
'Full hearts beat higher so.'

VII.

O Heart, O Love, beware!—
Look up, and boast not there.
For who has twirled at the pin?
'Tis the World, between Death and Sin,—
The World, and the world's Despair!
And Death has quickened his pace
To the hearth, with a mocking face,
Familiar as Love, in Love's own place—
Heart, wilt thou go?
'Still, no!
'High hearts must grieve even so.'

VIII.

The house is waste to-day,—
The leaf has dropt from the spray,

The thorn, prickt through to the song.
If summer doeth no wrong
The winter will, they say.
Sing, Heart! what heart replies?
In vain we were calm and wise,
If the tears unkissed stand on in our eyes,
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'Ah, no!
Grieved hearts must break even so.'

IX.

Howbeit all is not lost.
The warm noon ends in frost,
And worldly tongues of promise,
Like sheep-bells, die off from us
On the desert hills cloud-crossed!
Yet, through the silence, shall
Pierce the death-angel's call,
And 'Come up hither,' recover all.
Heart, wilt thou go?
—'I go!
Broken hearts triumph so.'

WISDOM UNAPPLIED.

I.

If I were thou, O butterfly,
And poised my purple wing to spy
The sweetest flowers that live and die,

II.

I would not waste my strength on those,
As thou,—for summer has a close,
And pansies bloom not in the snows.

III.

If I were thou, O working bee,
And all that honey-gold I see,
Could delve from roses easily,

IV.

I would not hive it at man's door,
As thou,—that heirdom of my store
Should make him rich, and leave me poor.

V.

If I were thou, O eagle proud,
And screamed the thunder back aloud,
And faced the lightning from the cloud,

VI.

I would not build my eyrie-throne,
As thou,—upon a crumbling stone,
Which the next storm may trample down.

VII.

If I were thou, O gallant steed,
With pawing hoof, and dancing head,
And eye outrunning thine own speed,

VIII.

I would not meeken to the rein,
As thou,—nor smooth my nostril plain
From the glad desert's snort and strain.

IX.

If I were thou, red-breasted bird,
With song at shut-up window heard,
Like Love's sweet yes too long deferred,

X.

I would not overstay delight,
As thou,—but take a swallow-flight,
Till the new spring returned to sight.

XI.

While yet I spake, a touch was laid
Upon my brow, whose pride did fade,
And thus, methought, an angel said,—

XII.

'If I were *thou* who sing'st this song,
Most wise for others, and most strong
In seeing right while doing wrong,

XIII.

'I would not waste my cares, and choose,
As *thou*,—to seek what thou must lose,
Such gains as perish in the use.

XIV.

'I would not work where none can win,
As *thou*,—half way 'twixt grief and sin,
But look above, and judge within.

XV.

'I would not let my pulse beat high,
As *thou*,—towards fame's regality,
Nor yet in love's great jeopardy.

XVI.

'I would not champ the hard cold bit,
As *thou*,—of what the world thinks fit,
But take God's freedom, using it.

XVII.

'I would not play earth's winter out,
As *thou*,—but gird my soul about,
And live for life past death and doubt.

XVIII.

'Then sing, O singer!—but allow,
Beast, fly, and bird, called foolish now,
Are wise (for all thy scorn) as thou!'

MEMORY AND HOPE.

I.

Back-looking Memory
And prophet Hope both sprang from out the ground;
One, where the flashing of Cherubic sword
Fell sad, in Eden's ward,—
And one, from Eden earth, within the sound
Of the four rivers lapsing pleasantly,
What time the promise after curse was said—
'Thy seed shall bruise his head.'

II.

Poor Memory's brain is wild,
As moonstruck by that flaming atmosphere
When she was born. Her deep eyes shine and shone
With light that conquereth sun
And stars to wanner paleness year by year.
With odorous gums, she mixeth things defiled.
She trampleth down earth's grasses green and sweet,
With her far-wandering feet.

III.

She plucketh many flowers,
Their beauty on her bosom's coldness killing.
She teacheth every melancholy sound
To winds and waters round.
She droppeth tears with seed where man is tilling
The rugged soil in his exhausted hours.
She smileth—ah me! in her smile doth go
A mood of deeper woe.

IV.

Hope tripped out of sight,
Crowned with an Eden wreath she saw not witner,
And went a-nodding through the wilderness
With brow that shone no less
Than a sea-gull's wing, brought nearer by rough weather:
Searching the treeless rock for fruits of light:
Her fair quick feet being armed from stones and cold,
By slippers of pure gold.

V.

Memory did Hope much wrong,
And, while she dreamed, her slippers stole away;
But still she wended on with mirth unheeding,
Although her feet were bleeding,
Till Memory tracked her on a certain day,
And with most evil eyes did search her long
And cruelly, whereat she sank to ground
In a stark deadly swound.

VI.

And so my Hope were slain,
Had it not been that THOU wert standing near,
Oh Thou, who saidest 'live,' to creatures lying
In their own blood and dying!
For Thou her forehead to thine heart didst rear
And make its silent pulses sing again,—
Pouring a new light o'er her darkened eyne,
With tender tears from Thine!

VII.

Therefore my Hope arose
From out her swound and gazed upon Thy face,
And, meeting there that soft subduing look
Which Peter's spirit shook,
Sank downward in a rapture to embrace
Thy piercèd hands and feet with kisses close,
And prayed thee to assist her evermore
To 'reach the things before.'

VIII.

Then gavest thou the smile
Whence angel-wings thrill quick like summer lightning,
Vouchsafing rest beside thee, where she never
From Love and Faith may sever.—
Whereat the Eden crown she saw not whitening
A time ago, though whitening all the while,
Reddened with life, to hear the Voice which talked
To Adam as he walked.

HUMAN LIFE'S MYSTERY.

I.

We sow the glebe, we reap the corn,
We build the house where we may rest,
And then, at moments, suddenly,
We look up to the great wide sky,
Enquiring wherefore we were born . . .
For earnest, or for jest?

II.

The senses folding thick and dark
About the stifled soul within,
We guess diviner things beyond,
And yearn to them with yearning fond;
We strike out blindly to a mark
Believed in, but not seen.

III.

We vibrate to the pant and thrill
Wherewith Eternity has curled
In serpent-twine about God's seat;
While, freshening upward to His feet,
In gradual growth His full-leaved will
Expands from world to world.

IV.

And, in the tumult and excess
Of act and passion under sun,
We sometimes hear—oh, soft and far,
As silver star did touch with star,
The kiss of Peace and Righteousness
Through all things that are done.

V.

God keeps his holy mysteries
Just on the outside of man's dream.
In diapason slow, we think
To hear their pinions rise and sink,
While they float pure beneath His eyes,
Like swans adown a stream.

VI.

Abstractions, are they, from the forms
Of His great beauty?—exaltations
From His great glory?—strong previsions
Of what we shall be?—intuitions
Of what we are—in calms and storms,
Beyond our peace and passions?

VII.

Things nameless! which, in passing so,
Do stroke us with a subtle grace.
We say, 'Who passes?'—they are dumb.
We cannot see them go or come.
Their touches fall soft—cold—as snow
Upon a blind man's face.

VIII.

Yet, touching, so, they draw above
Our common thoughts to Heaven's unknown;
Our daily joy and pain, advance
To a divine significance,—
Our human love—O mortal love,
That light is not its own!

IX.

And, sometimes, horror chills our blood
To be so near such mystic Things,
And we wrap round us, for defence,
Our purple manners, moods of sense—
As angels, from the face of God,
Stand hidden in their wings.

X.

And, sometimes, through life's heavy swound
We grope for them!—with strangled breath
We stretch our hands abroad and try
To reach them in our agony,—
And widen, so, the broad life-wound
Which soon is large enough for death.

A CHILD'S THOUGHT OF GOD.

I.

They say that God lives very high.
But if you look above the pines
You cannot see our God; and why?

II.

And if you dig down in the mines
You never see Him in the gold;
Though, from Him, all that's glory shines.

III.

God is so good, He wears a fold
Of heaven and earth across His face—
Like secrets kept, for love, untold.

IV.

But still I feel that His embrace
Slides down by thrills, through all things made,
Through sight and sound of every place.

v.

As if my tender mother laid
On my shut lids, her kisses' pressure,
Half-waking me at night, and said
'Who kissed you through the dark, dear guesser?'

SONG OF THE ROSE.

ATTRIBUTED TO SAPPHO.

(*From Achilles Tatius.*)

If Zeus chose us a King of the flowers in his mirth,
He would call to the rose and would royally crown it,
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the grace of the earth,
Is the light of the plants that are growing upon it.
For the rose, ho, the rose! is the eye of the flowers,
Is the blush of the meadows that feel themselves fair,—
Is the lightning of beauty, that strikes through the bowers
On pale lovers who sit in the glow unaware.
Ho, the rose breathes of love! ho, the rose lifts the cup
To the red lips of Cypris invoked for a guest!
Ho, the rose, having curled its sweet leaves for the world,
Takes delight in the motion its petals keep up,
As they laugh to the Wind as it laughs from the west.

A DEAD ROSE.

I.

O ROSE, who dares to name thee?
No longer roseate now, nor soft, nor sweet,
But pale, and hard, and dry, as stubble-wheat,—
Kept seven years in a drawer, thy titles shame thee.

II.

The breeze that used to blow thee
Between the hedge-row thorns, and take away
An odour up the lane to last all day,—
If breathing now, unsweetened would forego thee.

III.

The sun that used to smite thee,
And mix his glory in thy gorgeous urn
Till beam appeared to bloom, and flower to burn,—
If shining now, with not a hue would light thee.

IV.

The dew that used to wet thee,
And, white first, grow incarnadined, because
It lay upon thee where the crimson was,—
If dropping now, would darken, where it met thee.

V.

The fly that 'lit upon thee,
To stretch the tendrils of its tiny feet
Along thy leaf's pure edges after heat,—
If 'lighting now, would coldly overrun thee.

VI.

The bee that once did suck thee,
And build thy perfumed ambers up his hive,
And swoon in thee for joy, till scarce alive,—
If passing now, would blindly overlook thee.

VII.

The heart doth recognise thee,
Alone, alone! the heart doth smell thee sweet,
Doth view thee fair, doth judge thee most complete,
Perceiving all those changes that disguise thee.

VIII.

Yes, and the heart doth owe thee
More love, dead rose, than to any roses bold
Which Julia wears at dances, smiling cold!—
Lie still upon this heart—which breaks below thee!

THE EXILE'S RETURN.

I.

When from thee, weeping I removed,
And from my land for years,
I thought not to return, Beloved,
With those same parting tears.
I come again to hill and lea,
Weeping for thee.

II.

I clasped thine hand, when standing last
Upon the shore in sight.

The land is green, the ship is fast,
I shall be there to-night.
I shall be there—no longer *we*—
No more with thee!

III.

Had I beheld thee dead and still,
I might more clearly know,
How heart of thine could turn as chill
As hearts by nature so;
How change could touch the falsehood-free
And changeless *thee*.

IV.

But, now thy fervid looks last-seen
Within my soul remain,
'Tis hard to think that *they* have been,
To be no more again!
That I shall vainly wait—ah me!
A word from thee.

V.

I could not bear to look upon
That mound of funeral clay,
Where one sweet voice is silence,—one
Æthereal brow decay:
Where all thy mortal I may see,
But never thee.

VI.

For thou art where all friends are gone
Whose parting pain is o'er;
And I, who love and weep alone,
Where thou wilt weep no more,

Weep bitterly and selfishly,
For *me*, not *thee*.

VII.

I know, Beloved, thou canst not know
That I endure this pain;
For saints in heaven, the Scriptures show,
Can never grieve again—
And grief known mine, even there, would be
Still shared by thee.

THE SLEEP.

"He giveth His beloved sleep."—*Psalm* cxxvii. 2.

I.

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace, surpassing this—
'He giveth His beloved, sleep!'

II.

What would we give to our beloved?
The hero's heart, to be unmoved,
The poet's star-tuned harp, to sweep,
The patriot's voice, to teach and rouse,
The monarch's crown, to light the brows?—
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

III.

What do we give to our beloved?
A little faith all undisproved,
A little dust to overweep,
And bitter memories to make
The whole earth blasted for our sake.
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

IV.

'Sleep soft, beloved!' we sometimes say,
But have no tune to charm away
Sad dreams that through the eyelids creep.
But never doleful dream again
Shall break the happy slumber when
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

V.

O earth, so full of dreary noises!
O men, with wailing in your voices!
O delvéd gold, the wailers heap!
O strife, O curse, that o'er it fall!
God strikes a silence through you all,
And giveth His beloved, sleep.

VI.

His dews drop mutely on the hill;
His cloud above it saileth still,
Though on its slope men sow and reap.
More softly than the dew is shed,
Or cloud is floated overhead,
He giveth His beloved, sleep.

VII.

Ay, men may wonder while they scan
A living, thinking, feeling man
Confirmed in such a rest to keep;
But angels say, and through the word
I think their happy smile is *heard*—
'He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

VIII.

For me, my heart that erst did go
Most like a tired child at a show,
That sees through tears the mummers leap,
Would now its wearied vision close,
Would childlike on His love repose,
Who giveth His beloved, sleep.

IX.

And, friends, dear friends,—when it shall be
That this low breath is gone from me,
And round my bier ye come to weep,
Let One, most loving of you all,
Say, 'Not a tear must o'er her fall;
'He giveth His beloved, sleep.'

THE MEASURE.

'He comprehended the dust of the earth in a measure (שְׁלִישׁ).'
Isaiah xl.

'Thou givest them tears to drink in a measure (שְׁלִישׁ).'*
Psalm lxxx.

I.

God, the Creator, with a pulseless hand
Of unoriginated power, hath weighed
The dust of earth and tears of man in one
Measure, and by one weight.
So saith His holy book.

II.

Shall we, then, who have issued from the dust,
And there return,—shall we, who toil for dust,
And wrap our winnings in this dusty life,
Say, 'No more tears, Lord God!
'The measure runneth o'er?'

III.

Oh, Holder of the balance, laughest thou?
Nay, Lord! be gentler to our foolishness,
For His sake who assumed our dust and turns
On thee pathetic eyes
Still moistened with our tears.

* I believe that the word occurs in no other part of the Hebrew Scriptures.

IV.

And teach us, O our Father, while we weep,
To look in patience upon earth and learn—
Waiting, in that meek gesture, till at last
These tearful eyes be filled
With the dry dust of death.

COWPER'S GRAVE.

I.

It is a place where poets crowned may feel the heart's decaying.
It is a place where happy saints may weep amid their praying.
Yet let the grief and humbleness, as low as silence, languish.
Earth surely now may give her calm to whom she gave her anguish.

II.

O poets, from a maniac's tongue was poured the deathless singing!
O Christians, at your cross of hope, a hopeless hand was clinging!
O men, this man in brotherhood your weary paths beguiling,
Groaned inly while he taught you peace, and died while ye were smiling!

III.

And now, what time ye all may read through dimming tears his story,
How discord on the music fell, and darkness on the glory,
And how when, one by one, sweet sounds and wandering lights departed,
He wore no less a loving face because so broken-hearted,

IV.

He shall be strong to sanctify the poet's high vocation,
And bow the meekest Christian down in meeker adoration.
Nor ever shall he be, in praise, by wise or good forsaken,
Named softly as the household name of one whom God hath taken.

V.

With quiet sadness and no gloom I learn to think upon him,—
With meekness that is gratefulness to God whose heaven hath won him,
Who suffered once the madness-cloud to His own love to blind him,
But gently led the blind along where breath and bird could find him,

VI.

And wrought within his shattered brain such quick poetic senses
As hills have language for, and stars, harmonious influences.

The pulse of dew upon the grass, kept his within its number,
And silent shadows from the trees refreshed him like a slumber.

VII.

Wild timid hares were drawn from woods to share his home-caresses,
Uplooking to his human eyes with sylvan tendernesses.
The very world, by God's constraint, from falsehood's ways removing,
Its women and its men became, beside him, true and loving.

VIII.

And though, in blindness, he remained unconscious of that guiding,
And things provided came without the sweet sense of providing,
He testified this solemn truth, while phrensy desolated,—
Nor man nor nature satisfy whom only God created.

IX.

Like a sick child that knoweth not his mother while she blesses
And drops upon his burning brow the coolness of her kisses,—
That turns his fevered eyes around—'My mother! where's my mother?'
As if such tender words and deeds could come from any other!—

X.

The fever gone, with leaps of heart he sees her bending o'er him,
Her face all pale from watchful love, the unweary love she bore him!—
Thus, woke the poet from the dream his life's long fever gave him,
Beneath those deep pathetic Eyes, which closed in death to save him.

XI.

Thus? oh, not *thus!* no type of earth can image that awaking,
Wherein he scarcely heard the chant of seraphs, round him breaking,
Or felt the new immortal throb of soul from body parted,
But felt those eyes alone, and knew,—'*My* Saviour! *not* deserted!'

XII.

Deserted! Who hath dreamt that when the cross in darkness rested,
Upon the Victim's hidden face, no love was manifested?
What frantic hands outstretched have e'er the atoning drops averted?
What tears have washed them from the soul, that *one* should be deserted?

XIII.

Deserted! God could separate from His own essence rather;
And Adam's sins *have* swept between the righteous Son and Father.

Yea, once, Immanuel's orphaned cry his universe
hath shaken—
It went up single, echoless, 'My God, I am forsaken!'

XIV.

It went up from the Holy's lips amid his lost creation,
That, of the lost, no son should use those words of
desolation!
That earth's worst phrensies, marring hope, should
mar not hope's fruition,
And I, on Cowper's grave, should see his rapture in
a vision.

THE WEAKEST THING.

I.

Which is the weakest thing of all
Mine heart can ponder?
The sun, a little cloud can pall
With darkness yonder?
The cloud, a little wind can move
Where'er it listeth?
The wind, a little leaf above,
Though sere, resisteth?

II.

What time that yellow leaf was green,
My days were gladder;
But now, whatever Spring may mean,
I must grow sadder.

Ah me! a *leaf* with sighs can wring
My lips asunder!
Then is mine heart the weakest thing
Itself can ponder.

III.

Yet, Heart, when sun and cloud are pined
And drop together,
And at a blast which is not wind,
The forests wither,
Thou, from the darkening deathly curse,
To glory breakest,—
The Strongest of the universe
Guarding the weakest!

THE PET-NAME.

——— the name
Which from THEIR lips seemed a caress.
MISS MITFORD'S *Dramatic Scenes.*

I.

I HAVE a name, a little name,
Uncadenced for the ear,
Unhonoured by ancestral claim,
Unsanctified by prayer and psalm
The solemn font anear.

II.

It never did, to pages wove
For gay romance, belong.
It never dedicate did move
As 'Sacharissa,' unto love—
'Orinda,' unto song.

III.

Though I write books it will be read
Upon the leaves of none,
And afterward, when I am dead,
Will ne'er be graved for sight or tread,
Across my funeral-stone.

IV.

This name, whoever chance to call,
Perhaps your smile may win.
Nay, do not smile! mine eyelids fall
Over mine eyes, and feel withal
The sudden tears within.

V.

Is there a leaf that greenly grows
Where summer meadows bloom,
But gathereth the winter snows,
And changeth to the hue of those,
If lasting till they come?

VI.

Is there a word, or jest, or game,
But time encrusteth round
With sad associate thoughts the same?
And so to me my very name
Assumes a mournful sound.

VII.

My brother gave that name to me
When we were children twain,—
When names acquired baptismally
Were hard to utter, as to see
That life had any pain.

VIII.

No shade was on us then, save one
Of chestnuts from the hill—
And through the word our laugh did run
As part thereof. The mirth being done,
He calls me by it still.

IX.

Nay, do not smile! I hear in it
What none of you can hear,—
The talk upon the willow seat,
The bird and wind that did repeat
Around, our human cheer.

X.

I hear the birthday's noisy bliss,
My sisters' woodland glee,—
My father's praise, I did not miss,
When stooping down he cared to kiss
The poet at his knee,—

XI.

And voices, which, to name me, aye
Their tenderest tones were keeping—
To some I never more can say
An answer, till God wipes away
In heaven these drops of weeping.

XII.

My name to me a sadness wears,
No murmurs cross my mind.
Now God be thanked for these thick tears,
Which show, of those departed years,
Sweet memories left behind.

XIII.

Now God be thanked for years enwrought
With love which softens yet.
Now God be thanked for every thought
Which is so tender it has caught
Earth's guerdon of regret.

XIV.

Earth saddens, never shall remove,
Affections purely given;
And e'en that mortal grief shall prove
The immortality of love,
And heighten it with Heaven.

THE MOURNING MOTHER

(OF THE DEAD BLIND).

I.

Dost thou weep, mourning mother,
For thy blind boy in the grave?
That no more with each other,
Sweet counsel ye can have?—
That he, left dark by nature,
Can never more be led
By thee, maternal creature,
Along smooth paths instead?
That thou canst no more show him
The sunshine, by the heat;
The river's silver flowing,
By murmurs at his feet?

The foliage, by its coolnèss;
  The roses, by their smell;
And all creation's fulness,
  By Love's invisible?
Weepest thou to behold not
  His meek blind eyes again,—
Closed doorways which were folded,
  And prayed against in vain—
And under which, sate smiling
  The child-mouth evermore,
As one who watcheth, wiling
  The time by, at a door?
And weepest thou to feel not
  His clinging hand on thine—
Which now, at dream-time, will not
  Its cold touch disentwine?
And weepest thou still ofter,
  Oh, never more to mark
His low soft words, made softer
  By speaking in the dark?
Weep on, thou mourning mother!

II.

But since to him when living
  Thou wast both sun and moon,
Look o'er his grave, surviving
  From a high sphere alone.
Sustain that exaltation,
  Expand that tender light,
And hold in mother-passion
  Thy Blessèd in thy sight.
See how he went out straightway
  From the dark world he knew,—
No twilight in the gateway

To mediate 'twixt the two,—
Into the sudden glory,
Out of the dark he trod,
Departing from before thee
At once to light and God!—
For the first face, beholding
The Christ's in its divine,
For the first place, the golden
And tideless hyaline;
With trees, at lasting summer,
That rock to songful sound,
While angels, the new-comer,
Wrap a still smile around.
Oh, in the blessed psalm now,
His happy voice he tries,
Spreading a thicker palm-bough,
Than others, o'er his eyes!
Yet still, in all the singing,
Thinks haply of thy song
Which, in his life's first springing,
Sang to him all night long;
And wishes it beside him,
With kissing lips that cool
And soft did overglide him,
To make the sweetness full.
Look up, O mourning mother,
Thy blind boy walks in light!
Ye wait for one another,
Before God's infinite.
But thou art now the darkest,
Thou mother left below—
Thou, the sole blind,—thou markest,
Content that it be so,—
Until ye two have meeting

Where Heaven's pearl-gate is,
And *he* shall lead thy feet in,
As once thou leddest *his*.
Wait on, thou mourning mother.

A VALEDICTION.

I.

God be with thee, my beloved,—God be with thee!
Else alone thou goest forth,
Thy face unto the north,
Moor and pleasance all around thee and beneath thee,
Looking equal in one snow;
While I who try to reach thee,
Vainly follow, vainly follow,
With the farewell and the hollo,
And cannot reach thee so.
Alas, I can but teach thee.
God be with thee, my beloved,—God be with thee.

II.

Can I teach thee, my beloved,—can I teach thee?
If I said, 'Go left or right,'
The counsel would be light,
The wisdom, poor of all that could enrich thee.
My right would show like left;
My raising would depress thee,
My choice of light would blind thee,
Of way, would leave behind thee,
Of end, would leave bereft,
Alas, I can but bless thee!
May God teach thee, my beloved,—may God teach thee.

III.

Can I bless thee, my beloved,—can I bless thee?
What blessing word can I,
From mine own tears, keep dry?
What flowers grow in my field wherewith to dress thee?
My good reverts to ill;
My calmnesses would move thee,
My softnesses would prick thee,
My bindings up would break thee,
My crownings, curse and kill.
Alas, I can but love thee!
May God bless thee, my beloved,—May God bless thee.

IV.

Can I love thee, my beloved,—can I love thee?
And is *this* like love, to stand
With no help in my hand,
When strong as death I fain would watch above thee?
My love-kiss can deny
No tear that falls beneath it;
Mine oath of love can swear thee
From no ill that comes near thee,—
And thou diest while I breathe it,
And *I*—I can but die!
May God love thee, my beloved,—may God love thee.

LESSONS FROM THE GORSE.

'To win the secret of a weed's plain heart.'
LOWELL.

I.

Mountain gorses, ever-golden,
Cankered not the whole year long!
Do ye teach us to be strong,
Howsoever pricked and holden
Like your thorny blooms, and so
Trodden on by rain and snow,
Up the hill-side of this life, as bleak as where ye grow?

II.

Mountain blossoms, shining blossoms,
Do ye teach us to be glad
When no summer can be had,
Blooming in our inward bosoms?
Ye, whom God preserveth still,—
Set as lights upon a hill,
Tokens to the wintry earth that Beauty liveth still!

III.

Mountain gorses, do ye teach us
From that academic chair,
Canopied with azure air,
That the wisest word man reaches
Is the humblest he can speak?
Ye, who live on mountain peak,
Yet live low along the ground, beside the grasses meek

IV.

Mountain gorses, since Linnæus
Knelt beside you on the sod,
For your beauty thanking God,—
For your teaching, ye should see us
Bowing in prostration new!
Whence arisen,—if one or two
Drops be on our cheeks—O world, they are not tears, but dew.

THE LADY'S YES.

I.

'Yes,' I answered you last night;
'No,' this morning, sir, I say.
Colours seen by candle-light
Will not look the same by day.

II.

When the viols played their best,
Lamps above, and laughs below,
Love me sounded like a jest,
Fit for *yes* or fit for *no*.

III.

Call me false or call me free—
Vow, whatever light may shine,
No man on your face shall see
Any grief, for change on mine.

IV.

Yet the sin is on us both;
Time to dance is not to woo;
Wooing light makes fickle troth,
Scorn of *me* recoils on *you*.

V.

Learn to win a lady's faith
Nobly, as the thing is high,
Bravely, as for life and death—
With a loyal gravity.

VI.

Lead her from the festive boards,
Point her to the starry skies,
Guard her, by your truthful words,
Pure from courtship's flatteries.

VII.

By your truth she shall be true,
Ever true, as wives of yore;
And her *yes*, once said to you,
SHALL be Yes for evermore.

A WOMAN'S SHORTCOMINGS.

I.

She has laughed as softly as if she sighed,
  She has counted six, and over,
Of a purse well filled, and a heart well tried—
  Oh, each a worthy lover!
They 'give her time;' for her soul must slip
  Where the world has set the grooving.
She will lie to none with her fair red lip—
  But love seeks truer loving.

II.

She trembles her fan in a sweetness dumb,
  As her thoughts were beyond recalling,
With a glance for *one*, and a glance for *some*,
  From her eyelids rising and falling:
Speaks common words with a blushful air,
  Hears bold words, unreproving;
But her silence says—what she never will swear—
  And love seeks better loving.

III.

Go, lady, lean to the night-guitar,
  And drop a smile to the bringer,
Then smile as sweetly, when he is far,
  At the voice of an indoor singer.
Bask tenderly beneath tender eyes;
  Glance lightly, on their removing;
And join new vows to old perjuries—
  But dare not call it loving.

IV.

Unless you can think when the song is done,
No other is soft in the rhythm;
Unless you can feel, when left by One,
That all men else go with him;
Unless you can know, when unpraised by his breath,
That your beauty itself wants proving;
Unless you can swear, 'For life, for death!'—
Oh, fear to call it loving!

V.

Unless you can muse in a crowd all day,
On the absent face that fixed you;
Unless you can love, as the angels may,
With the breadth of heaven betwixt you;
Unless you can dream that his faith is fast,
Through behoving and unbehoving;
Unless you can *die* when the dream is past—
Oh, never call it loving!

A MAN'S REQUIREMENTS.

I.

Love me, sweet, with all thou art,
Feeling, thinking, seeing,—
Love me in the lightest part,
Love me in full being.

II.

Love me with thine open youth
In its frank surrender;
With the vowing of thy mouth,
With its silence tender.

III.

Love me with thine azure eyes,
Made for earnest granting!
Taking colour from the skies,
Can Heaven's truth be wanting?

IV.

Love me with their lids, that fall
Snow-like at first meeting.
Love me with thine heart, that all
The neighbours then see beating.

V.

Love me with thine hand stretched out
Freely—open-minded.
Love me with thy loitering foot,—
Hearing one behind it.

VI.

Love me with thy voice, that turns
Sudden faint above me;
Love me with thy blush that burns
When I murmur, *Love me!*

VII.

Love me with thy thinking soul—
Break it to love-sighing;
Love me with thy thoughts that roll
On through living—dying.

VIII.

Love me in thy gorgeous airs,
When the world has crowned thee:
Love me, kneeling at thy prayers,
With the angels round thee.

IX.

Love me pure, as musers do,
Up the woodlands shady.
Love me gaily, fast, and true,
As a winsome lady.

X.

Through all hopes that keep us brave,
Further off or nigher,
Love me for the house and grave,—
And for something higher.

XI.

Thus, if thou wilt prove me, dear,
Woman's love no fable,
I will love *thee*—half-a-year—
As a man is able.

A YEAR'S SPINNING.

I.

He listened at the porch that day,
To hear the wheel go on, and on:
And then it stopped—ran back away—
While through the door he brought the sun.
But now my spinning is all done.

II.

He sate beside me, with an oath
That love ne'er ended, once begun.
I smiled—believing for us both,
What was the truth for only one.
And now my spinning is all done.

III.

My mother cursed me that I heard
A young man's wooing as I spun.
Thanks, cruel mother, for that word,—
For I have, since, a harder known:
And now my spinning is all done.

IV.

I thought—O God!—my first-born's cry
Both voices to mine ear would drown.
I listened in mine agony—
It was the *silence* made me groan!
And now my spinning is all done.

V.

Bury me 'twixt my mother's grave,
(Who cursed me on her death-bed lone)
And my dead baby's (God it save!)
Who, not to bless me, would not moan.
And now my spinning is all done.

VI.

A stone upon my heart and head,
But no name written on the stone!
Sweet neighbours, whisper low instead,
'This sinner was a loving one—
And now her spinning is all done.'

VII.

And let the door ajar remain,
In case he should pass by anon;
And leave the wheel out very plain,—
That HE, when passing in the sun,
May see the spinning is all done.

CHANGE UPON CHANGE.

I.

Five months ago, the stream did flow,
The lilies bloomed within the sedge,
And we were lingering to and fro,
Where none will track thee in this snow,
Along the stream, beside the edge.
Ah, sweet, be free to love and go!
For if I do not hear thy foot,
The frozen river is as mute,
The flowers have dried down to the root.
And why, since these be changed since May,
Shouldst *thou* change less than *they?*

II.

And slow, slow, as the winter snow,
The tears have drifted to mine eyes;
And my poor cheeks, five months ago,
Set blushing at thy praises so,
Put paleness on for a disguise.
Ah, sweet, be free to praise and go!
For if my face is turned too pale,
It was thine oath that first did fail,—
It was thy love proved false and frail!
And why, since these be changed enow,
Should *I* change less than *thou?*

THAT DAY.

I.

I STAND by the river where both of us stood,
And there is but one shadow to darken the flood;
And the path leading to it, where both used to pass,
Has the step but of one, to take dew from the grass,—
One forlorn since that day

II.

The flowers of the margin are many to see;
None stoops at my bidding to pluck them for me.
The bird in the alder sings loudly and long,—
My low sound of weeping disturbs not his song,
As thy vow did that day.

III.

I stand by the river—I think of the vow—
Oh, calm as the place is, vow-breaker, be thou!
I leave the flower growing, the bird, unreproved;—
Would I trouble *thee* rather than *them*, my beloved,
And my lover that day?

IV.

Go, be sure of my love—by that treason forgiven;
Of my prayers—by the blessings they win thee from Heaven;
Of my grief—(guess the length of the sword by the sheath's)
By the silence of life, more pathetic than death's!
Go,—be clear of that day!

A REED.

I.

I AM no trumpet, but a reed:
No flattering breath shall from me lead
A silver sound, a hollow sound.
I will not wring, for priest or king,
One blast that in re-echoing
Would leave a bondsman faster bound.

II.

I am no trumpet, but a reed,—
A broken reed, the wind indeed
Left flat upon a dismal shore;
Yet if a little maid, or child,
Should sigh within it, earnest-mild,
This reed will answer evermore.

III.

I am no trumpet, but a reed.
Go, tell the fishers, as they spread
Their nets along the river's edge,
I will not tear their nets at all,
Nor pierce their hands, if they should fall;
Then let them leave me in the sedge.

THE RUNAWAY SLAVE AT PILGRIM'S POINT.

I.

I STAND on the mark beside the shore
Of the first white pilgrim's bended knee,
Where exile turned to ancestor,
And God was thanked for liberty.
I have run through the night, my skin is as dark,
I bend my knee down on this mark . .
I look on the sky and the sea.

II.

O pilgrim-souls, I speak to you!
I see you come out proud and slow
From the land of the spirits pale as dew,
And round me and round me ye go!
O pilgrims, I have gasped and run
All night long from the whips of one
Who in your names works sin and woe.

III.

And thus I thought that I would come
And kneel here where ye knelt before,
And feel your souls around me hum
In undertone to the ocean's roar;

And lift my black face, my black hand,
Here, in your names, to curse this land
Ye blessed in freedom's evermore.

IV.

I am black, I am black!
And yet God made me, they say,
But if He did so, smiling back
He must have cast his work away
Under the feet of his white creatures,
With a look of scorn,—that the dusky features
Might be trodden again to clay.

V.

And yet he has made dark things
To be glad and merry as light.
There's a little dark bird, sits and sings;
There's a dark stream ripples out of sight;
And the dark frogs chant in the safe morass,
And the sweetest stars are made to pass
O'er the face of the darkest night.

VI.

But *we* who are dark, we are dark!
Ah God, we have no stars!
About our souls in care and cark
Our blackness shuts like prison-bars.
The poor souls crouch so far behind,
That never a comfort can they find
By reaching through the prison-bars.

VII.

Indeed we live beneath the sky,
That great smooth Hand of God stretched out

On all His children fatherly,
To save them from the dread and doubt
Which would be, if, from this low place,
All opened straight up to His face
Into the grand eternity.

VIII.

And still God's sunshine and His frost,
They make us hot, they make us cold,
As if we were not black and lost;
And the beasts and birds, in wood and fold,
Do fear and take us for very men!
Could the weep-poor-will or the cat of the glen
Look into my eyes and be bold?

IX.

I am black, I am black!—
But, once, I laughed in girlish glee,
For one of my colour stood in the track
Where the drivers drove, and looked at me,
And tender and full was the look he gave—
Could a slave look *so* at another slave?—
I look at the sky and the sea.

X.

And from that hour our spirits grew
As free as if unsold, unbought.
Oh, strong enough, since we were two,
To conquer the world, we thought!
The drivers drove us day by day;
We did not mind, we went one way,
And no better a freedom sought.

XI.

In the sunny ground between the canes,
He said 'I love you' as he passed:
When the shingle-roof rang sharp with the rains,
I heard how he vowed it fast.
While others shook he smiled in the hut,
As he carved me a bowl of the cocoa-nut
Through the roar of the hurricanes.

XII.

I sang his name instead of a song,
Over and over I sang his name—
Upward and downward I drew it along
My various notes,—the same, the same!
I sang it low, that the slave-girls near
Might never guess from aught they could hear,
It was only a name—a name.

XIII.

I look on the sky and the sea.
We were two to love, and two to pray,—
Yes, two, O God, who cried to Thee,
Though nothing didst Thou say.
Coldly Thou sat'st behind the sun!
And now I cry who am but one,
Thou wilt not speak to-day.—

XIV.

We were black, we were black.
We had no claim to love and bliss,
What marvel, if each went to wrack?
They wrung my cold hands out of his,—

They dragged him . . . where? . . I crawled to touch
His blood's mark in the dust! . . not much,
Ye pilgrim-souls, . . though plain as *this*!

XV.

Wrong, followed by a deeper wrong!
Mere grief's too good for such as I.
So the white men brought the shame ere long
To strangle the sob of my agony.
They would not leave me for my dull
Wet eyes!—it was too merciful
To let me weep pure tears and die.

XVI.

I am black, I am black!
I wore a child upon my breast...
An amulet that hung too slack,
And, in my unrest, could not rest.
Thus we went moaning, child and mother,
One to another, one to another,
Until all ended for the best.

XVII.

For hark! I will tell you low . . low . .
I am black, you see,—
And the babe who lay on my bosom so,
Was far too white . . too white for me;
As white as the ladies who scorned to pray
Beside me at church but yesterday,
Though my tears had washed a place for my knee.

XVIII.

My own, own child! I could not bear
To look in his face, it was so white.

I covered him up with a kerchief there;
I covered his face in close and tight:
And he moaned and struggled, as well might be,
For the white child wanted his liberty—
Ha, ha! he wanted the master-right.

XIX.

He moaned and beat with his head and feet,
His little feet that never grew—
He struck them out, as it was meet,
Against my heart to break it through.
I might have sung and made him mild—
But I dared not sing to the white-faced child
The only song I knew.

XX.

I pulled the kerchief very close:
He could not see the sun, I swear,
More then, alive, than now he does
From between the roots of the mango ... where?
.. I know where. Close! a child and mother
Do wrong to look at one another,
When one is black and one is fair.

XXI.

Why, in that single glance I had
Of my child's face, .. I tell you all,
I saw a look that made me mad!
The *master's* look, that used to fall
On my soul like his lash .. or worse!—
And so, to save it from my curse,
I twisted it round in my shawl.

XXII.

And he moaned and trembled from foot to head,
He shivered from head to foot;
Till, after a time, he lay instead
Too suddenly still and mute.
I felt, beside, a stiffening cold . .
I dared to lift up just a fold, . .
As in lifting a leaf of the mango-fruit.

XXIII.

But *my* fruit . . . ha, ha!—there, had been
(I laugh to think on't at this hour!)
Your fine white angels (who have seen
Nearest the secret of God's power)
And plucked my fruit to make them wine,
And sucked the soul of that child of mine,
As the humming-bird sucks the soul of the flower

XXIV.

Ha, ha, the trick of the angels white!
They freed the white child's spirit so.
I said not a word, but, day and night,
I carried the body to and fro,
And it lay on my heart like a stone . . as chill.
—The sun may shine out as much as he will:
I am cold, though it happened a month ago.

XXV.

From the white man's house and the black man's hut
I carried the little body on.
The forest's arms did round us shut,
And silence through the trees did run.
They asked no question as I went,—
They stood too high for astonishment,—
They could see God sit on his throne.

XXVI.

My little body, kerchiefed fast,
I bore it on through the forest . . on ;
And when I felt it was tired at last,
I scooped a hole beneath the moon.
Through the forest-tops the angels far,
With a white sharp finger from every star,
Did point and mock at what was done.

XXVII.

Yet when it was all done aright, . .
Earth, 'twixt me and my baby, strewed, . .
All, changed to black earth, . . nothing white, . .
A dark child in the dark!—ensued
Some comfort, and my heart grew young.
I sate down smiling there and sung
The song I learnt in my maidenhood.

XXVIII.

And thus we two were reconciled,
The white child and black mother, thus;
For, as I sang it soft and wild,
The same song, more melodious,
Rose from the grave whereon I sate,
It was the dead child singing that,
To join the souls of both of us.

XXIX.

I look on the sea and the sky!
Where the pilgrims' ships first anchored lay
The free sun rideth gloriously,
But the pilgrim-ghosts have slid away
Through the earliest streaks of the morn.
My face is black, but it glares with a scorn
Which they dare not meet by day.

XXX.

Ah!—in their 'stead, their hunter sons!
Ah, ha! they are on me—they hunt in a ring—
Keep off! I brave you all at once—
I throw off your eyes like snakes that sting!
You have killed the black eagle at nest, I think.
Did you never stand still in your triumph, and shrink
From the stroke of her wounded wing?

XXXI.

(Man, drop that stone you dared to lift!—)
I wish you who stand there five a-breast,
Each, for his own wife's joy and gift,
A little corpse as safely at rest
As mine in the mangos!—Yes, but *she*
May keep live babies on her knee,
And sing the song she likes the best.

XXXII.

I am not mad: I am black.
I see you staring in my face—
I know you staring, shrinking back,
Ye are born of the Washington-race.
And this land is the free America.
And this mark on my wrist.. (I prove what I say)
Ropes tied me up here to the flogging-place.

XXXIII.

You think I shrieked then? Not a sound!
I hung, as a gourd hangs in the sun.
I only cursed them all around
As softly as I might have done

My very own child.—From these sands
Up to the mountains, lift your hands,
O slaves, and end what I begun!

XXXIV.

Whips, curses; these must answer those!
For in this UNION, you have set
Two kinds of men in adverse rows,
Each loathing each; and all forget
The seven wounds in Christ's body fair,
While HE sees gaping everywhere
Our countless wounds that pay no debt.

XXXV.

Our wounds are different. Your white men
Are, after all, not gods indeed,
Nor able to make Christs again
Do good with bleeding. *We* who bleed
(Stand off!) we help not in our loss!
We are too heavy for our cross,
And fall and crush you and your seed.

XXXVI.

I fall, I swoon! I look at the sky.
The clouds are breaking on my brain.
I am floated along, as if I should die
Of liberty's exquisite pain.
In the name of the white child waiting for me
In the death-dark where we may kiss and agree,
White men, I leave you all curse-free
In my broken heart's disdain!

THE DEAD PAN.

Excited by Schiller's 'Gotter Griechenlands,' and partly founded on a well-known tradition mentioned in a treatise of Plutarch ('De Oraculorum Defectu'), according to which at the hour of the Saviour's agony, a cry of 'Great Pan is dead!' swept across the waves in the hearing of certain mariners,—and the oracles ceased.

It is in all veneration to the memory of the deathless Schiller, that I oppose a doctrine still more dishonouring to poetry than to Christianity.

As Mr. Kenyon's graceful and harmonious paraphrase of the German poem was the first occasion of the turning of my thoughts in this direction, I take advantage of the pretence to indulge my feelings (which overflow on other grounds) by inscribing my lyric to that dear friend and relative, with the earnestness of appreciating esteem as well as of affectionate gratitude. 1844.

I.

Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence?
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide? In floating islands,
With a wind that evermore
Keeps you out of sight of shore?
Pan, Pan is dead.

II.

In what revels are ye sunken,
In old Æthiopia?
Have the Pygmies made you drunken,
Bathing in mandragora
Your divine pale lips, that shiver
Like the lotus in the river?
Pan, Pan is dead.

III.

Do ye sit there still in slumber,
In gigantic Alpine rows?
The black poppies out of number
Nodding, dripping from your brows
To the red lees of your wine,
And so kept alive and fine?
Pan, Pan is dead.

IV.

Or lie crushed your stagnant corses
Where the silver spheres roll on,
Stung to life by centric forces
Thrown like rays out from the sun?—
While the smoke of your old altars
Is the shroud that round you welters?
Great Pan is dead.

V.

'Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,'
Said the old Hellenic tongue!
Said the hero-oaths, as well as
Poets' songs the sweetest sung!
Have ye grown deaf in a day?
Can ye speak not yea or nay—
Since Pan is dead?

VI.

Do ye leave your rivers flowing
All alone, O Naiades,
While your drenchèd locks dry slow in
This cold feeble sun and breeze?—
Not a word the Naiads say,
Though the rivers run for aye,
For Pan is dead.

VII.

From the gloaming of the oak-wood,
O ye Dryads, could ye flee?
At the rushing thunderstroke, would
No sob tremble through the tree?—
Not a word the Dryads say,
Though the forests wave for aye,
For Pan is dead.

VIII.

Have ye left the mountain places,
Oreads wild, for other tryst?
Shall we see no sudden faces
Strike a glory through the mist?
Not a sound the silence thrills
Of the everlasting hills.
Pan, Pan is dead.

IX.

O twelve gods of Plato's vision,
Crowned to starry wanderings,—
With your chariots in procession,
And your silver clash of wings!
Very pale ye seem to rise,
Ghosts of Grecian deities,—
Now Pan is dead!

X.

Jove, that right hand is unloaded,
Whence the thunder did prevail,
While in idiocy of godhead
Thou art staring the stars pale!
And thine eagle, blind and old,
Roughs his feathers in the cold.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XI.

Where, O Juno, is the glory
Of thy regal look and tread?
Will they lay, for evermore, thee,
On thy dim, straight, golden bed?
Will thy queendom all lie hid
Meekly under either lid?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XII.

Ha, Apollo! floats his golden
Hair all mist-like where he stands,
While the Muses hang enfolding
Knee and foot with faint wild hands?
'Neath the clanging of thy bow,
Niobe looked lost as thou!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIII.

Shall the casque with its brown iron,
Pallas' broad blue eyes, eclipse,
And no hero take inspiring
From the god-Greek of her lips?
'Neath her olive dost thou sit,
Mars the mighty, cursing it?
Pan, Pan is dead.

XIV.

Bacchus, Bacchus! on the panther
He swoons,—bound with his own vines.
And his Mænads slowly saunter,
Head aside, among the pines,
While they murmur dreamingly,
'Evohe—ah—evohe—!'
Ah, Pan is dead!

XV.

Neptune lies beside the trident,
Dull and senseless as a stone;
And old Pluto deaf and silent
Is cast out into the sun.
Ceres smileth stern thereat,
'We *all* now are desolate—
Now Pan is dead.'

XVI.

Aphrodite! dead and driven
As thy native foam, thou art;
With the cestus long done heaving
On the white calm of thine heart!
Ai Adonis! at that shriek,
Not a tear runs down her cheek—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVII.

And the Loves, we used to know from
One another, huddled lie,
Frore as taken in a snow-storm,
Close beside her tenderly,—
As if each had weakly tried
Once to kiss her as he died.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XVIII.

What, and Hermes? Time enthralleth
All thy cunning, Hermes, thus,—
And the ivy blindly crawleth
Round thy brave caduceus?
Hast thou no new message for us,
Full of thunder and Jove-glories?
Nay, Pan is dead.

XIX.

Crownèd Cybele's great turret
Rocks and crumbles on her head.
Roar the lions of her chariot
Toward the wilderness, unfed.
Scornful children are not mute,—
'Mother, mother, walk a-foot—
Since Pan is dead.'

XX.

In the fiery-hearted centre
Of the solemn universe,
Ancient Vesta,—who could enter
To consume thee with this curse?
Drop thy grey chin on thy knee,
O thou palsied Mystery!
For Pan is dead.

XXI.

Gods, we vainly do adjure you,—
Ye return nor voice nor sign!
Not a votary could secure you
Even a grave for your Divine!
Not a grave, to show thereby,
Here these grey old gods do lie.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXII.

Even that Greece who took your wages,
Calls the obolus outworn.
And the hoarse deep-throated ages
Laugh your godships unto scorn.
And the poets do disclaim you
Or grow colder if they name you—
And Pan is dead.

XXIII.

Gods bereavèd, gods belated,
With your purples rent asunder!
Gods discrowned and desecrated,
Disinherited of thunder!
Now, the goats may climb and crop
The soft grass on Ida's top—
Now, Pan is dead.

XXIV.

Calm, of old, the bark went onward,
When a cry more loud than wind,
Rose up, deepened, and swept sunward,
From the pilèd Dark behind;
And the sun shrank and grew pale,
Breathed against by the great wail—
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXV.

And the rowers from the benches
Fell,—each shuddering on his face—
While departing Influences
Struck a cold back through the place;
And the shadow of the ship
Reeled along the passive deep—
'Pan, Pan is dead.'

XXVI.

And that dismal cry rose slowly
And sank slowly through the air,
Full of spirit's melancholy
And eternity's despair!
And they heard the words it said—
PAN IS DEAD—GREAT PAN IS DEAD—
PAN, PAN IS DEAD.

XXVII.

'Twas the hour when One in Sion
Hung for love's sake on a cross;
When His brow was chill with dying,
And His soul was faint with loss;
When His priestly blood dropped downward,
And His kingly eyes looked throneward—
Then, Pan was dead.

XXVIII.

By the love he stood alone in,
His sole Godhead rose complete,
And the false gods fell down moaning,
Each from off his golden seat;
All the false gods with a cry
Rendered up their deity—
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXIX.

Wailing wide across the islands,
They rent, vest-like, their Divine!
And a darkness and a silence
Quenched the light of every shrine;
And Dodona's oak swang lonely
Henceforth, to the tempest only,
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXX.

Pythia staggered,—feeling o'er her,
Her lost god's forsaking look.
Straight her eyeballs filmed with horror,
And her crispy fillets shook,
And her lips gasped through their foam,
For a word that did not come.
Pan, Pan was dead.

XXXI.

O ye vain false gods of Hellas,
Ye are silent evermore!
And I dash down this old chalice,
Whence libations ran of yore.
See, the wine crawls in the dust
Wormlike—as your glories must,
Since Pan is dead.

XXXII.

Get to dust, as common mortals,
By a common doom and track!
Let no Schiller from the portals
Of that Hades, call you back,
Or instruct us to weep all
At your antique funeral.
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXIII.

By your beauty, which confesses
Some chief Beauty conquering you,—
By our grand heroic guesses,
Through your falsehood, at the True,—
We will weep *not* . . . ! earth shall roll
Heir to each god's aureole—
And Pan is dead.

XXXIV.

Earth outgrows the mythic fancies
Sung beside her in her youth;
And those debonaire romances
Sound but dull beside the truth.
Phœbus' chariot-course is run.
Look up, poets, to the sun!
Pan, Pan is dead.

XXXV.

Christ hath sent us down the angels;
And the whole earth and the skies
Are illumed by altar-candles
Lit for blessèd mysteries;
And a Priest's hand, through creation,
Waveth calm and consecration—
And Pan is dead.

XXXVI.

Truth is fair: should we forego it?
Can we sigh right for a wrong?
God himself is the best Poet,
And the Real is his song.
Sing his truth out fair and full,
And secure his beautiful.
Let Pan be dead.

XXXVII.

Truth is large. Our aspiration
Scarce embraces half we be.
Shame, to stand in His creation,
And doubt truth's sufficiency!—
To think God's song unexcelling
The poor tales of our own telling—
When Pan is dead.

XXXVIII.

What is true and just and honest,
What is lovely, what is pure—
All of praise that hath admonisht,
All of virtue, shall endure,—
These are themes for poets' uses,
Stirring nobler than the Muses,
Ere Pan was dead.

XXXIX.

O brave poets, keep back nothing,
Nor mix falsehood with the whole.
Look up Godward; speak the truth in
Worthy song from earnest soul!
Hold, in high poetic duty,
Truest Truth the fairest Beauty.
Pan, Pan is dead.

A CHILD'S GRAVE AT FLORENCE.

A.A.E.C.
BORN, JULY, 1848. DIED, NOVEMBER, 1849.

I.

Of English blood, of Tuscan birth,
What country should we give her?
Instead of any on the earth,
The civic Heavens receive her.

II.

And here, among the English tombs,
In Tuscan ground we lay her,
While the blue Tuscan sky endomes
Our English words of prayer.

III.

A little child!—how long she lived,
By months, not years, is reckoned:
Born in one July, she survived
Alone to see a second.

IV.

Bright featured, as the July sun
Her little face still played in,
And splendours, with her birth begun,
Had had no time for fading.

V.

So, LILY, from those July hours,
No wonder we should call her;
She looked such kinship to the flowers,
Was but a little taller.

VI.

A Tuscan Lily,—only white,
As Dante, in abhorrence
Of red corruption, wished aright
The lilies of his Florence.

VII.

We could not wish her whiter,—her
Who perfumed with pure blossom
The house!—a lovely thing to wear
Upon a mother's bosom!

VIII.

This July creature thought perhaps
Our speech not worth assuming;
She sate upon her parents' laps,
And mimicked the gnat's humming:

IX.

Said 'father,' 'mother,'—then, left off,
For tongues celestial, fitter.
Her hair had grown just long enough
To catch heaven's jasper-glitter.

X.

Babes! Love could always hear and see
Behind the cloud that hid them.
'Let little children come to me,
And do not thou forbid them.'

XI.

So, unforbidding, have we met,
And gently here have laid her,
Though winter is no time to get
The flowers that should o'erspread her.

XII.

We should bring pansies quick with spring,
Rose, violet, daffodilly,
And also, above everything,
White lilies for our Lily.

XIII.

Nay, more than flowers, this grave exacts,—
Glad, grateful attestations
Of her sweet eyes and pretty acts,
With calm renunciations.

XIV.

Her very mother with light feet
Should leave the place too earthy,
Saying, 'The angels have thee, Sweet,
Because we are not worthy.'

XV.

But winter kills the orange buds,
The gardens in the frost are,
And all the heart dissolves in floods,
Remembering we have lost her!

XVI.

Poor earth, poor heart,—too weak, too weak,
To miss the July shining!
Poor heart!—what bitter words we speak,
When God speaks of resigning!

XVII.

Sustain this heart in us that faints,
Thou God, the self-existent!
We catch up wild at parting saints,
And feel thy Heaven too distant.

XVIII.

The wind that swept them out of sin,
Has ruffled all our vesture.
On the shut door that let them in,
We beat with frantic gesture,—

XIX.

To us, us also—open straight!
The outer life is chilly—
Are *we* too, like the earth, to wait
Till next year for our Lily?

XX.

—Oh, my own baby on my knees,
My leaping, dimpled treasure,
At every word I write like these,
Clasped close, with stronger pressure!

XXI.

Too well my own heart understands,—
At every word beats fuller—
My little feet, my little hands,
And hair of Lily's colour!

XXII.

—But God gives patience, Love learns strength,
And Faith remembers promise,
And Hope itself can smile at length
On other hopes gone from us.

XXIII.

Love, strong as Death, shall conquer Death,
Through struggle, made more glorious.
This mother stills her sobbing breath,
Renouncing, yet victorious.

XXIV.

Arms, empty of her child, she lifts,
With spirit unbereaven,—
'God will not take back all his gifts;
My Lily's mine in heaven!

XXV.

'Still mine! maternal rights serene
Not given to another!
The crystal bars shine faint between
The souls of child and mother.

XXVI.

'Meanwhile,' the mother cries, 'content!
Our love was well divided.
Its sweetness following where she went,
Its anguish stayed where I did.

XXVII.

'Well done of God, to halve the lot,
And give her all the sweetness;
To us, the empty room and cot,—
To her, the Heaven's completeness.

XXVIII.

'To us, this grave—to her, the rows
The mystic palm-trees spring in.
To us, the silence in the house,—
To her, the choral singing.

XXIX.

'For her, to gladden in God's view,—
For us, to hope and bear on!—
Grow, Lily, in thy garden new,
Beside the rose of Sharon.

XXX.

'Grow fast in heaven, sweet Lily clipped,
In love more calm than this is,—
And may the angels dewy-lipped
Remind thee of our kisses!

XXXI.

'While none shall tell thee of our tears,
These human tears now falling,
Till, after a few patient years,
One home shall take us all in.

XXXII.

'Child, father, mother—who, left out?
Not mother, and not father!—
And when, our dying couch about,
The natural mists shall gather,

XXXIII.

'Some smiling angel close shall stand
In old Correggio's fashion,
And bear a LILY in his hand,
For death's ANNUNCIATION.'

CATARINA TO CAMOENS;

DYING IN HIS ABSENCE ABROAD, AND REFERRING TO THE POEM IN WHICH HE RECORDED THE SWEETNESS OF HER EYES.

I.

On the door you will not enter,
I have gazed too long—adieu!
Hope withdraws her peradventure—
Death is near me,—and not *you*.
Come, O lover,
Close and cover
These poor eyes, you called, I ween,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

II.

When I heard you sing that burden
In my vernal days and bowers,
Other praises disregarding,
I but harkened that of yours—
Only saying,
In heart-playing,
'Blessed eyes mine eyes have been,
If the sweetest, HIS have seen!'

III.

But all changes. At this vesper,
Cold the sun shines down the door.
If you stood there, would you whisper
'Love, I love you,' as before,—

Death pervading
Now and shading
Eyes you sang of, that yestreen,
As the sweetest ever seen?

IV.

Yes, I think, were you beside them,
Near the bed I die upon,—
Though their beauty you denied them,
As you stood there, looking down,
You would truly
Call them duly,
For the love's sake found therein,—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

V.

And if *you* looked down upon them,
And if *they* looked up to *you*,
All the light which has foregone them
Would be gathered back anew.
They would truly
Be as duly
Love-transformed to beauty's sheen,—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VI.

But, ah me! you only see me,
In your thoughts of loving man,
Smiling soft perhaps and dreamy
Through the wavings of my fan,—
And unweeting
Go repeating,
In your reverie serene,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VII.

While my spirit leans and reaches
From my body still and pale,
Fain to hear what tender speech is
In your love to help my bale—
O my poet,
Come and show it!
Come, of latest love, to glean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

VIII.

O my poet, O my prophet,
When you praised their sweetness so,
Did you think, in singing of it,
That it might be near to go?
Had you fancies
From their glances,
That the grave would quickly screen
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

IX.

No reply! the fountain's warble
In the court-yard sounds alone.
As the water to the marble
So my heart falls with a moan
From love-sighing
To this dying.
Death forerunneth Love to win
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

X.

Will you come? When I'm departed
Where all sweetnesses are hid;

Where thy voice, my tender-hearted,
Will not lift up either lid.
Cry, O lover,
Love is over!
Cry beneath the cypress green—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

XI.

When the angelus is ringing,
Near the convent will you walk,
And recall the choral singing
Which brought angels down our talk?
Spirit-shriven
I viewed Heaven,
Till you smiled—'Is earth unclean,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

XII.

When beneath the palace-lattice,
You ride slow as you have done,
And you see a face there—that is
Not the old familiar one,—
Will you oftly
Murmur softly,
'Here, ye watched me morn and e'en,
Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XIII.

When the palace-ladies, sitting
Round your gittern, shall have said,
'Poet sing those verses written
For the lady who is dead,'

Will you tremble,
Yet dissemble,—
Or sing hoarse, with tears between,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen?'

XIV.

'Sweetest eyes!' how sweet in flowings,
The repeated cadence is!
Though you sang a hundred poems,
Still the best one would be this.
I can hear it
'Twixt my spirit
And the earth-noise intervene—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XV.

But the priest waits for the praying,
And the choir are on their knees,
And the soul must pass away in
Strains more solemn high than these.
Miserere
For the weary!
Oh, no longer for Catrine,
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XVI.

Keep my riband, take and keep it,
(I have loosed it from my hair) *
Feeling, while you overweep it,
Not alone in your despair,
Since with saintly
Watch unfaintly

* She left him the riband from her hair.

Out of heaven shall o'er you lean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

XVII.

But—but *now*—yet unremovèd
Up to Heaven, they glisten fast.
You may cast away Belovèd
In your future all my past.
Such old phrases
May be praises
For some fairer bosom-queen—
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen!'

XVIII.

Eyes of mine, what are ye doing?
Faithless, faithless,—praised amiss
If a tear be of your showing,
Dropt for any hope of HIS!
Death has boldness
Besides coldness,
If unworthy tears demean
'Sweetest eyes, were ever seen.'

XIX.

I will look out to his future;
I will bless it till it shine.
Should he ever be a suitor
Unto sweeter eyes than mine,
Sunshine gild them,
Angels shield them,
Whatsoever eyes terrene
Be the sweetest HIS have seen!

LIFE AND LOVE.

I.

Fast this Life of mine was dying.
Blind already and calm as death.
Snowflakes on her bosom lying
Scarcely heaving with her breath.

II.

Love came by, and having known her
In a dream of fabled lands,
Gently stooped, and laid upon her
Mystic chrism of holy hands; .

III.

Drew his smile across her folded
Eyelids, as the swallow dips;
Breathed as finely as the cold did,
Through the locking of her lips.

IV.

So, when Life looked upward, being
Warmed and breathed on from above,
What sight could she have for seeing,
Evermore . . . but only Love?

A DENIAL.

I.

We have met late—it is too late to meet,
O friend, not more than friend!
Death's forecome shroud is tangled round my feet,
And if I step or stir, I touch the end.
In this last jeopardy
Can I approach thee, I, who cannot move?
How shall I answer thy request for love?
Look in my face and see.

II.

I love thee not, I dare not love thee! go
In silence; drop my hand.
If thou seek roses, seek them where they blow
In garden-alleys, not in desert-sand.
Can life and death agree,
That thou should'st stoop thy song to my complaint?
I cannot love thee. If the word is faint,
Look in my face and see.

III.

I might have loved thee in some former days.
Oh, then, my spirits had leapt
As now they sink, at hearing thy love-praise.
Before these faded cheeks were overwept,
Had this been asked of me,
To love thee with my whole strong heart and head,—
I should have said still . . . yes, but *smiled* and said,
'Look in my face and see!'

IV.

But now . . God sees me. God, who took my heart
And drowned it in life's surge.
In all your wide warm earth I have no part—
A light song overcomes me like a dirge.
Could Love's great harmony
The saints keep step to when their bonds are loose,
Not weigh me down? am *I* a wife to choose?
Look in my face and see.

V.

While I behold, as plain as one who dreams,
Some woman of full worth,
Whose voice, as cadenced as a silver stream's,
Shall prove the fountain-soul which sends it forth;
One younger, more thought-free
And fair and gay, than I, thou must forget,
With brighter eyes than these . . which are not wet . .
Look in my face and see!

VI.

So farewell thou, whom I have known too late
To let thee come so near.
Be counted happy while men call thee great,
And one belovèd woman feels thee dear!—
Not I!—that cannot be.
I am lost, I am changed,—I must go farther, where
The change shall take me worse, and no one dare
Look in my face to see.

VII.

Meantime I bless thee. By these thoughts of mine
I bless thee from all such!

I bless thy lamp to oil, thy cup to wine,
Thy hearth to joy, thy hand to an equal touch
Of loyal troth. For me,
I love thee not, I love thee not!—away!
Here's no more courage in my soul to say
'Look in my face and see.'

PROOF AND DISPROOF.

I.

Dost thou love me, my belovéd?
Who shall answer yes or no?
What is provéd or disprovéd
When my soul enquireth so,
Dost thou love me, my belovéd?

II.

I have seen thy heart to-day,
Never open to the crowd,
While to love me aye and aye
Was the vow as it was vowed
By thine eyes of stedfast grey.

III.

Now I sit alone, alone—
And the hot tears break and burn.
Now, Belovéd, thou art gone,
Doubt and terror have their turn.
Is it love that I have known?

IV.

I have known some bitter things,—
  Anguish, anger, solitude.
Year by year an evil brings,
  Year by year denies a good;
March winds violate my springs.

V.

I have known how sickness bends,
  I have known how sorrow breaks,—
How quick hopes have sudden ends,
  How the heart thinks till it aches
Of the smile of buried friends.

VI.

Last, I have known *thee*, my brave
  Noble thinker, lover, doer!
The best knowledge last I have.
  But thou comest as the thrower
Of fresh flowers upon a grave.

VII.

Count what feelings used to move me!
  Can this love assort with those?
Thou, who art so far above me,
  Wilt thou stoop so, for repose?
Is it true that thou canst love me?

VIII.

Do not blame me if I doubt thee.
  I can call love by its name
When thine arm is wrapt about me;
  But even love seems not the same,
When I sit alone, without thee.

IX.

In thy clear eyes I descried
Many a proof of love, to-day;
But to-night, those unbelied
Speechful eyes being gone away,
There's the proof to seek, beside.

X.

Dost thou love me, my belovéd?
Only *thou* canst answer yes!
And, thou gone, the proof's disprovéd,
And the cry rings answerless—
Dost thou love me, my belovéd?

INCLUSIONS.

I.

Oh, wilt thou have my hand, Dear, to lie along in thine?
As a little stone in a running stream, it seems to lie and pine.
Now drop the poor pale hand, Dear, . . . unfit to plight with thine.

II.

Oh, wilt thou have my cheek, Dear, drawn closer to thine own?
My cheek is white, my cheek is worn, by many a tear run down.
Now leave a little space, Dear, . . lest it should wet thine own.

III.

Oh, must thou have my soul, Dear, commingled
with thy soul?—
Red grows the cheek, and warm the hand. . . the
part is in the whole!
Nor hands nor cheeks keep separate, when soul is
joined to soul.

INSUFFICIENCY.

I.

There is no one beside thee and no one above thee,
Thou standest alone as the nightingale sings!
And my words that would praise thee are impo-
tent things,
For none can express thee though all should ap-
prove thee.
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can love thee.

II.

Say, what can I do for thee? weary thee, grieve thee?
Lean on thy shoulder, new burdens to add?
Weep my tears over thee, making thee sad?
Oh, hold me not—love me not! let me retrieve thee.
I love thee so, Dear, that I only can leave thee.

SONNETS

FROM THE PORTUGUESE.

I.

I thought once how Theocritus had sung
Of the sweet years, the dear and wished for years,
Who each one in a gracious hand appears
To bear a gift for mortals, old or young:
And, as I mused it in his antique tongue,
I saw, in gradual vision through my tears,
The sweet, sad years, the melancholy years,
Those of my own life, who by turns had flung
A shadow across me. Straightway I was 'ware,
So weeping, how a mystic Shape did move
Behind me, and drew me backward by the hair,
And a voice said in mastery while I strove, . .
'Guess now who holds thee?'—'Death,' I said. But, there,
The silver answer rang . . 'Not Death, but Love.'

II.

But only three in all God's universe
Have heard this word thou hast said,—Himself, beside
Thee speaking, and me listening! and replied
One of us . . *that* was God, . . and laid the curse
So darkly on my eyelids, as to amerce
My sight from seeing thee,—that if I had died,
The deathweights, placed there, would have signified
Less absolute exclusion. 'Nay' is worse
From God than from all others, O my friend!
Men could not part us with their worldly jars,
Nor the seas change us, nor the tempests bend;
Our hands would touch for all the mountain-bars,—
And, heaven being rolled between us at the end,
We should but vow the faster for the stars.

III.

Unlike are we, unlike, O princely Heart!
Unlike our uses and our destinies.
Our ministering two angels look surprise
On one another, as they strike athwart
Their wings in passing. Thou, bethink thee, art
A guest for queens to social pageantries,
With gages from a hundred brighter eyes
Than tears even can make mine, to ply thy part
Of chief musician. What hast *thou* to do
With looking from the lattice-lights at me,
A poor, tired, wandering singer, . . singing through
The dark, and leaning up a cypress-tree?
The chrism is on thine head,—on mine, the dew,—
And Death must dig the level where these agree.

IV.

Thou hast thy calling to some palace-floor,
Most gracious singer of high poems! where
The dancers will break footing, from the care
Of watching up thy pregnant lips for more.
And dost thou lift this house's latch too poor
For hand of thine? and canst thou think and bear
To let thy music drop here unaware
In folds of golden fulness at my door?
Look up and see the casement broken in,
The bats and owlets builders in the roof!
My cricket chirps against thy mandolin.
Hush, call no echo up in further proof
Of desolation! there's a voice within
That weeps . . as thou must sing . . alone, aloof.

V.

I lift my heavy heart up solemnly,
As once Electra her sepulchral urn,
And, looking in thine eyes, I overturn
The ashes at thy feet. Behold and see
What a great heap of grief lay hid in me,
And how the red wild sparkles dimly burn
Through the ashen greyness. If thy foot in scorn
Could tread them out to darkness utterly,
It might be well perhaps. But if instead
Thou wait beside me for the wind to blow
The grey dust up, . . . those laurels on thine head
O my beloved, will not shield thee so,
That none of all the fires shall scorch and shred
The hair beneath. Stand further off then! go.

VI.

Go from me. Yet I feel that I shall stand
Henceforward in thy shadow. Nevermore
Alone upon the threshold of my door
Of individual life, I shall command
The uses of my soul, nor lift my hand
Serenely in the sunshine as before,
Without the sense of that which I forbore. . .
Thy touch upon the palm. The widest land
Doom takes to part us, leaves thy heart in mine
With pulses that beat double. What I do
And what I dream include thee, as the wine
Must taste of its own grapes. And when I sue
God for myself, He hears that name of thine,
And sees within my eyes, the tears of two.

VII.

The face of all the world is changed, I think,
Since first I heard the footsteps of thy soul
Move still, oh, still, beside me, as they stole
Betwixt me and the dreadful outer brink
Of obvious death, where I, who thought to sink,
Was caught up into love, and taught the whole
Of life in a new rhythm. The cup of dole
God gave for baptism, I am fain to drink,
And praise its sweetness, Sweet, with thee anear.
The names of country, heaven, are changed away
For where thou art or shall be, there or here;
And this . . this lute and song . . loved yesterday,
(The singing angels know) are only dear,
Because thy name moves right in what they say.

VIII.

What can I give thee back, O liberal
And princely giver, who has brought the gold
And purple of thine heart, unstained, untold,
And laid them on the outside of the wall
For such as I to take or leave withal,
In unexpected largesse? am I cold,
Ungrateful, that for these most manifold
High gifts, I render nothing back at all?
Not so; not cold,—but very poor instead.
Ask God who knows. For frequent tears have run
The colours from my life, and left so dead
And pale a stuff, it were not fitly done
To give the same as pillow to thy head.
Go farther! let it serve to trample on.

IX.

Can it be right to give what I can give?
To let thee sit beneath the fall of tears
As salt as mine, and hear the sighing years
Re-sighing on my lips renunciative
Through those infrequent smiles which fail to live
For all thy adjurations? O my fears,
That this can scarce be right! We are not peers,
So to be lovers; and I own, and grieve,
That givers of such gifts as mine are, must
Be counted with the ungenerous. Out, alas!
I will not soil thy purple with my dust,
Nor breathe my poison on thy Venice-glass,
Nor give thee any love . . . which were unjust.
Beloved, I only love thee! let it pass.

X.

Yet, love, mere love, is beautiful indeed
And worthy of acceptation. Fire is bright,
Let temple burn, or flax. An equal light
Leaps in the flame from cedar plank or weed,
And love is fire; and when I say at need
I love thee . . mark! . . *I love thee!* . . in thy sight
I stand transfigured, glorified aright,
With conscience of the new rays that proceed
Out of my face toward thine. There's nothing low
In love, when love the lowest: meanest creatures
Who love God, God accepts while loving so.
And what I *feel*, across the inferior features
Of what I *am*, doth flash itself, and show
How that great work of Love enhances Nature's.

XI.

And therefore if to love can be desert,
I am not all unworthy. Cheeks as pale
As these you see, and trembling knees that fail
To bear the burden of a heavy heart,—
This weary minstrel-life that once was girt
To climb Aornus, and can scarce avail
To pipe now 'gainst the valley nightingale
A melancholy music,—why advert
To these things? O Beloved, it is plain
I am not of thy worth nor for thy place!
And yet, because I love thee, I obtain
From that same love this vindicating grace,
To live on still in love, and yet in vain, . .
To bless thee, yet renounce thee to thy face.

XII.

INDEED this very love which is my boast,
And which, when rising up from breast to brow,
Doth crown me with a ruby large enow
To draw men's eyes and prove the inner cost, . .
This love even, all my worth, to the uttermost,
I should not love withal, unless that thou
Hadst set me an example, shown me how,
When first thine earnest eyes with mine were crossed,
And love called love. And thus, I cannot speak
Of love even, as a good thing of my own.
Thy soul hath snatched up mine all faint and weak,
And placed it by thee on a golden throne,—
And that I love (O soul, we must be meek!)
Is by thee only, whom I love alone.

XIII.

AND wilt thou have me fashion into speech
The love I bear thee, finding words enough,
And hold the torch out, while the winds are rough,
Between our faces, to cast light on each?—
I drop it at thy feet. I cannot teach
My hand to hold my spirit so far off
From myself. . me . . that I should bring thee proof
In words, of love hid in me out of reach.
Nay, let the silence of my womanhood
Commend my woman-love to thy belief,—
Seeing that I stand unwon, however wooed,
And rend the garment of my life, in brief,
By a most dauntless, voiceless fortitude,
Lest one touch of this heart convey its grief.

XIV.

If thou must love me, let it be for nought
Except for love's sake only. Do not say
'I love her for her smile . . her look . . her way
Of speaking gently, . . for a trick of thought
That falls in well with mine, and certes brought
A sense of pleasant ease on such a day'—
For these things in themselves, Beloved, may
Be changed, or change for thee,—and love, so wrought,
May be unwrought so. Neither love me for
Thine own dear pity's wiping my cheeks dry,—
A creature might forget to weep, who bore
Thy comfort long, and lose thy love thereby!
But love me for love's sake, that evermore
Thou may'st love on, through love's eternity.

XV.

Accuse me not, beseech thee, that I wear
Too calm and sad a face in front of thine;
For we two look two ways, and cannot shine
With the same sunlight on our brow and hair.
On me thou lookest, with no doubting care,
As on a bee shut in a crystalline,—
Since sorrow hath shut me safe in love's divine,
And to spread wing and fly in the outer air
Were most impossible failure, if I strove
To fail so. But I look on thee . . on thee . .
Beholding, besides love, the end of love,
Hearing oblivion beyond memory!
As one who sits and gazes from above,
Over the rivers to the bitter sea.

XVI.

And yet, because thou overcomest so,
Because thou art more noble and like a king,
Thou canst prevail against my fears and fling
Thy purple round me, till my heart shall grow
Too close against thine heart, henceforth to know
How it shook when alone. Why, conquering
May prove as lordly and complete a thing
In lifting upward, as in crushing low!
And as a vanquished soldier yields his sword
To one who lifts him from the bloody earth,—
Even so, Beloved, I at last record,
Here ends my strife. If *thou* invite me forth,
I rise above abasement at the word.
Make thy love larger to enlarge my worth.

XVII.

My poet, thou canst touch on all the notes
God set between His After and Before,
And strike up and strike off the general roar
Of the rushing worlds, a melody that floats
In a serene air purely. Antidotes
Of medicated music, answering for
Mankind's forlornest uses, thou canst pour
From thence into their ears. God's will devotes
Thine to such ends, and mine to wait on thine.
How, Dearest, wilt thou have me for most use?
A hope, to sing by gladly? . . or a fine
Sad memory, with thy songs to interfuse?
A shade, in which to sing . . . of palm or pine?
A grave, on which to rest from singing? . . Choose.

XVIII.

I NEVER gave a lock of hair away
To a man, Dearest, except this to thee,
Which now upon my fingers thoughtfully
I ring out to the full brown length and say
'Take it.' My day of youth went yesterday;
My hair no longer bounds to my foot's glee,
Nor plant I it from rose or myrtle-tree,
As girls do, any more. It only may
Now shade on two pale cheeks, the mark of tears,
Taught drooping from the head that hangs aside
Through sorrow's trick. I thought the funeral-shears
Would take this first, but Love is justified,—
Take it thou, . . finding pure, from all those years,
The kiss my mother left here when she died.

XIX.

THE soul's Rialto hath its merchandise;
I barter curl for curl upon that mart,
And from my poet's forehead to my heart,
Receive this lock which outweighs argosies,—
As purely black, as erst, to Pindar's eyes,
The dim purpureal tresses gloomed athwart
The nine white Muse-brows. For this counterpart,
Thy bay-crown's shade, Beloved, I surmise,
Still lingers on thy curl, it is so black!
Thus, with a fillet of smooth-kissing breath,
I tie the shadow safe from gliding back,
And lay the gift where nothing hindereth,
Here on my heart, as on thy brow, to lack
No natural heat till mine grows cold in death.

XX.

Beloved, my Beloved, when I think
That thou wast in the world a year ago,
What time I sate alone here in the snow
And saw no footprint, heard the silence sink
No moment at thy voice, . . but, link by link,
Went counting all my chains, as if that so
They never could fall off at any blow
Struck by thy possible hand . . . . why, thus I drink
Of life's great cup of wonder! Wonderful,
Never to feel thee thrill the day or night
With personal act or speech,—nor ever cull
Some prescience of thee with the blossoms white
Thou sawest growing! Atheists are as dull,
Who cannot guess God's presence out of sight.

XXI.

Say over again, and yet once over again,
That thou dost love me. Though the word repeated
Should seem 'a cuckoo-song,' as thou dost treat it,
Remember never to the hill or plain,
Valley and wood, without her cuckoo-strain,
Comes the fresh spring in all her green completed.
Beloved, I, amid the darkness greeted
By a doubtful spirit-voice, in that doubt's pain
Cry . . 'Speak once more . . thou lovest!' Who can
fear
Too many stars, though each in heaven shall roll—
Too many flowers, though each shall crown the year?
Say thou dost love me, love me, love me—toll
The silver iterance!—only minding, Dear,
To love me also in silence, with thy soul.

XXII.

When our two souls stand up erect and strong,
Face to face, silent, drawing nigh and nigher,
Until the lengthening wings break into fire
At either curved point,—what bitter wrong
Can the earth do to us, that we should not long
Be here contented? Think. In mounting higher,
The angels would press on us, and aspire
To drop some golden orb of perfect song
Into our deep, dear silence. Let us stay
Rather on earth, Belovèd,—where the unfit
Contrarious moods of men recoil away
And isolate pure spirits, and permit
A place to stand and love in for a day,
With darkness and the death-hour rounding it.

XXIII.

Is it indeed so? If I lay here dead,
Would'st thou miss any life in losing mine?
And would the sun for thee more coldly shine,
Because of grave-damps falling round my head?
I marvelled, my Belovèd, when I read
Thy thought so in the letter. I am thine—
But . . *so* much to thee? Can I pour thy wine
While my hands tremble? Then my soul, instead
Of dreams of death, resumes life's lower range.
Then, love me, Love! look on me . . breathe on me!
As brighter ladies do not count it strange,
For love, to give up acres and degree,
I yield the grave for thy sake, and exchange
My near sweet view of Heaven, for earth with thee!

XXIV.

Let the world's sharpness like a clasping knife
Shut in upon itself and do no harm
In this close hand of Love, now soft and w...
And let us hear no sound of human strife
After the click of the shutting. Life to life—
I lean upon thee, Dear, without alarm,
And feel as safe as guarded by a charm
Against the stab of worldlings, who if rife
Are weak to injure. Very whitely still
The lilies of our lives may reassure
Their blossoms from their roots, accessible
Alone to heavenly dews that drop not fewer;
Growing straight out of man's reach, on the hill.
God only, who made us rich, can make us poor.

XXV.

A heavy heart, Belovèd, have I borne
From year to year until I saw thy face,
And sorrow after sorrow took the place
Of all those natural joys as lightly worn
As the stringed pearls . . each lifted in its turn
By a beating heart at dance-time. Hopes apace
Were changed to long despairs, till God's own grace
Could scarcely lift above the world forlorn
My heavy heart. Then *thou* didst bid me bring
And let it drop adown thy calmly great
Deep being! Fast it sinketh, as a thing
Which its own nature doth precipitate,
While thine doth close above it, mediating
Betwixt the stars and the unaccomplished fate.

XXVI.

I LIVED with visions for my company,
Instead of men and women, years ago,
And found them gentle mates, nor thought to know
A sweeter music than they played to me.
But soon their trailing purple was not free
Of this world's dust,—their lutes did silent grow,
And I myself grew faint and blind below
Their vanishing eyes. Then THOU didst come . . to be,
Beloved, what they seemed. Their shining fronts,
Their songs, their splendours, (better, yet the same,
As river-water hallowed into fonts)
Met in thee, and from out thee overcame
My soul with satisfaction of all wants—
Because God's gifts put man's best dreams to shame.

XXVII.

MY own beloved, who hast lifted me
From this drear flat of earth where I was thrown,
And, in betwixt the languid ringlets, blown
A life-breath, till the forehead hopefully
Shines out again, as all the angels see,
Before thy saving kiss! My own, my own,
Who camest to me when the world was gone,
And I who looked for only God found *thee!*
I find thee; I am safe, and strong, and glad.
As one who stands in dewless asphodel,
Looks backward on the tedious time he had
In the upper life,—so I, with bosom swell,
Make witness, here, between the good and bad,
That Love, as strong as Death, retrieves as well.

XXVIII.

My letters! all dead paper, . . mute and white!—
And yet they seem alive and quivering
Against my tremulous hands which loose the string
And let them drop down on my knee to-night.
This said, . . he wished to have me in his sight
Once, as a friend: this fixed a day in spring
To come and touch my hand . . . a simple thing,
Yet I wept for it!—this, . . the paper's light . .
Said, *Dear, I love thee;* and I sank and quailed
As if God's future thundered on my past.
This said, *I am thine*—and so its ink has paled
With lying at my heart that beat too fast.
And this . . . O Love, thy words have ill availed,
If what this said, I dared repeat at last!

XXIX.

I think of thee!—my thoughts do twine and bud
About thee, as wild vines, about a tree,
Put out broad leaves, and soon there's nought to see
Except the straggling green which hides the wood.
Yet, O my palm-tree, be it understood
I will not have my thoughts instead of thee
Who art dearer, better! rather instantly
Renew thy presence. As a strong tree should,
Rustle thy boughs and set thy trunk all bare,
And let these bands of greenery which insphere thee
Drop heavily down, . . burst, shattered, everywhere!
Because, in this deep joy to see and hear thee
And breathe within thy shadow a new air,
I do not think of thee—I am too near thee.

XXX.

I see thine image through my tears to-night,
And yet to-day I saw thee smiling. How
Refer the cause?—Belovèd, is it thou,
Or I? who makes me sad? The acolyte
Amid the chanted joy and thankful rite,
May so fall flat, with pale insensate brow,
On the altar-stair. I hear thy voice and vow
Perplexed, uncertain, since thou art out of sight,
As he, in his swooning ears, the choir's amen.
Belovèd, dost thou love? or did I see all
The glory as I dreamed, and fainted when
Too vehement light dilated my ideal,
For my soul's eyes? Will that light come again,
As now these tears come.... falling hot and real?

XXXI.

Thou comest! all is said without a word.
I sit beneath thy looks, as children do
In the noon-sun, with souls that tremble through
Their happy eyelids from an unaverred
Yet prodigal inward joy. Behold, I erred
In that last doubt! and yet I cannot rue
The sin most, but the occasion... that we two
Should for a moment stand unministered
By a mutual presence. Ah, keep near and close,
Thou dovelike help! and, when my fears would rise,
With thy broad heart serenely interpose.
Brood down with thy divine sufficiencies
These thoughts which tremble when bereft of those,
Like callow birds left desert to the skies.

XXXII.

THE first time that the sun rose on thine oath
To love me, I looked forward to the moon
To slacken all those bonds which seemed too soon
And quickly tied to make a lasting troth.
Quick-loving hearts, I thought, may quickly loathe
And, looking on myself, I seemed not one
For such man's love!—more like an out of tune
Worn viol, a good singer would be wroth
To spoil his song with, and which, snatched in haste
Is laid down at the first ill-sounding note.
I did not wrong myself so, but I placed
A wrong on *thee*. For perfect strains may float
'Neath master-hands, from instruments defaced,—
And great souls, at one stroke, may do and doat.

XXXIII.

YES, call me by my pet-name! let me hear
The name I used to run at, when a child,
From innocent play, and leave the cowslips piled,
To glance up in some face that proved me dear
With the look of its eyes. I miss the clear
Fond voices, which, being drawn and reconciled
Into the music of Heaven's undefiled,
Call me no longer. Silence on the bier,
While I call God . . call God!—So let thy mouth
Be heir to those who are now exanimate.
Gather the north flowers to complete the south,
And catch the early love up in the late.
Yes, call me by that name,—and I, in truth,
With the same heart, will answer, and not wait.

XXXIV.

With the same heart, I said, I'll answer thee
As those, when thou shalt call me by my name—
Lo, the vain promise! is the same, the same,
Perplexed and ruffled by life's strategy?
When called before, I told how hastily
I dropped my flowers or brake off from a game,
To run and answer with the smile that came
At play last moment, and went on with me
Through my obedience. When I answer now,
I drop a grave thought,—break from solitude;—
Yet still my heart goes to thee . . . ponder how . .
Not as to a single good, but all my good!
Lay thy hand on it, best one, and allow
That no child's foot could run fast as this blood.

XXXV.

If I leave all for thee, wilt thou exchange
And be all to me? Shall I never miss
Home-talk and blessing and the common kiss
That comes to each in turn, nor count it strange,
When I look up, to drop on a new range
Of walls and floors . . another home than this?
Nay, wilt thou fill that place by me which is
Filled by dead eyes too tender to know change?
That's hardest. If to conquer love, has tried,
To conquer grief, tries more . . . as all things prove;
For grief indeed is love and grief beside.
Alas I have grieved so I am hard to love.
Yet love me—wilt thou? Open thine heart wide,
And fold within, the wet wings of thy dove.

XXXVI.

When we met first and loved, I did not build
Upon the event with marble. Could it mean
To last, a love set pendulous between
Sorrow and sorrow? Nay, I rather thrilled,
Distrusting every light that seemed to gild
The onward path, and feared to overlean
A finger even. And, though I have grown serene
And strong since then, I think that God has willed
A still renewable fear . . O love, O troth . .
Lest these enclasped hands should never hold,
This mutual kiss drop down between us both
As an unowned thing, once the lips being cold.
And Love, be false! if *he*, to keep one oath,
Must lose one joy, by his life's star foretold.

XXXVII.

Pardon, oh, pardon, that my soul should make
Of all that strong divineness which I know
For thine and thee, an image only so
Formed of the sand, and fit to shift and break.
It is that distant years which did not take
Thy sovranty, recoiling with a blow,
Have forced my swimming brain to undergo
Their doubt and dread, and blindly to forsake
Thy purity of likeness, and distorn
Thy worthiest love to a worthless counterfeit.
As if a shipwrecked Pagan, safe in port,
His guardian sea-god to commemorate,
Should set a sculptured porpoise, gills a-snort
And vibrant tail, within the temple-gate.

XXXVIII.

First time he kissed me, he but only kissed
The fingers of this hand wherewith I write;
And, ever since, it grew more clean and white. . .
Slow to world-greetings . . quick with its 'Oh, list,'
When the angels speak. A ring of amethyst
I could not wear here, plainer to my sight,
Than that first kiss. The second passed in height
The first, and sought the forehead, and half missed,
Half falling on the hair. O beyond meed!
That was the chrism of love, which love's own crown,
With sanctifying sweetness, did precede.
The third upon my lips was folded down
In perfect, purple state; since when, indeed,
I have been proud and said, 'My love, my own.'

XXXIX.

Because thou hast the power and own'st the grace
To look through and behind this mask of me,
(Against which years have beat thus blanchingly
With their rains,) and behold my soul's true face,
The dim and weary witness of life's race!—
Because thou hast the faith and love to see,
Through that same soul's distracting lethargy,
The patient angel waiting for a place
In the new Heavens!—because nor sin nor woe,
Nor God's infliction, nor death's neighbourhood,
Nor all which others viewing, turn to go, . .
Nor all which makes me tired of all, self-viewed, . .
Nothing repels thee, . . Dearest, teach me so
To pour out gratitude as thou dost, good.

XL.

Oh, yes! they love through all this world of ours!
I will not gainsay love, called love forsooth.
I have heard love talked in my early youth,
And since, not so long back but that the flowers
Then gathered, smell still. Mussulmans and Giaours
Throw kerchiefs at a smile, and have no ruth
For any weeping. Polypheme's white tooth
Slips on the nut, if, after frequent showers,
The shell is over-smooth,—and not so much
Will turn the thing called love, aside to hate,
Or else to oblivion. But thou art not such
A lover, my Beloved! thou canst wait
Through sorrow and sickness, to bring souls to touch,
And think it soon when others cry, 'Too late.'

XLI.

I thank all who have loved me in their hearts,
With thanks and love from mine. Deep thanks to all
Who paused a little near the prison-wall,
To hear my music in its louder parts,
Ere they went onward, each one to the mart's
Or temple's occupation, beyond call.
But thou, who, in my voice's sink and fall,
When the sob took it, thy divinest Art's
Own instrument didst drop down at thy foot,
To harken what I said between my tears, . .
Instruct me how to thank thee!—Oh, to shoot
My soul's full meaning into future years,
That *they* should lend it utterance, and salute
Love that endures, from Life that disappears!

XLII.

'My future will not copy fair my past'—
I wrote that once; and thinking at my side
My ministering life-angel justified
The word by his appealing look upcast
To the white throne of God, I turned at last,
And there, instead, saw thee, not unallied
To angels in thy soul!—Then I, long tried
By natural ills, received the comfort fast,
While budding, at thy sight, my pilgrim's staff
Gave out green leaves with morning dews impearled.
I seek no copy now of life's first half:
Leave here the pages with long musing curled,
And write me new my future's epigraph,
New angel mine, unhoped for in the world!

XLIII.

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday's
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

XLIV.

Beloved, thou hast brought me many flowers
Plucked in the garden, all the summer through
And winter, and it seemed as if they grew
In this close room, nor missed the sun and showers.
So, in the like name of that love of ours,
Take back these thoughts which here unfolded too,
And which on warm and cold days I withdrew
From my heart's ground. Indeed, those beds and bowers
Be overgrown with bitter weeds and rue,
And wait thy weeding: yet here's eglantine,
Here's ivy!—take them, as I used to do
Thy flowers, and keep them where they shall not pine.
Instruct thine eyes to keep their colours true,
And tell thy soul, their roots are left in mine.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

A Poem,

IN TWO PARTS.

ADVERTISEMENT TO THE FIRST EDITION.

This poem contains the impressions of the writer upon events in Tuscany of which she was a witness. 'From a window,' the critic may demur. She bows to the objection in the very title of her work. No continuous narrative nor exposition of political philosophy is attempted by her. It is a simple story of personal impressions, whose only value is in the intensity with which they were received, as proving her warm affection for a beautiful and unfortunate country, and the sincerity with which they are related, as indicating her own good faith and freedom from partisanship.

Of the two parts of this poem, the first was written nearly three years ago, while the second resumes the actual situation of 1851. The discrepancy between the two parts is a sufficient guarantee to the public of the truthfulness of the writer, who, though she certainly escaped the epidemic 'falling sickness' of enthusiasm for Pio Nino, takes shame upon herself that she believed, like a woman, some royal oaths, and lost sight of the probable consequences of some obvious popular defects. If the discrepancy should be painful to the reader, let him understand that to the writer it has been more so. But such discrepancies we are called upon to accept at every hour by the conditions of our nature, implying the interval between aspiration and performance, between faith and disillusion, between hope and fact.

> 'O trusted broken prophecy,
> O richest fortune sourly erost,
> Born for the future, to the future lost!'

may, not lost to the future in this case. The future of Italy shall not be disinherited.

Florence, 1851.

CASA GUIDI WINDOWS.

PART I.

I HEARD last night a little child go singing
'Neath Casa Guidi windows, by the church,
O bella libertà, O bella! stringing
The same words still on notes he went in search
So high for, you concluded the upspringing
Of such a nimble bird to sky from perch
Must leave the whole bush in a tremble green,
And that the heart of Italy must beat,
While such a voice had leave to rise serene
'Twixt church and palace of a Florence street!
A little child, too, who not long had been
By mother's finger steadied on his feet,
And still *O bella libertà* he sang.

Then I thought, musing of the innumerous
Sweet songs which still for Italy outrang
From older singers' lips, who sang not thus
Exultingly and purely, yet, with pang
Fast sheathed in music, touched the heart of us
So finely, that the pity scarcely pained.
I thought how Filicaja led on others,
Bewailers for their Italy enchained,
And how they called her childless among mothers,
Widow of empires, ay, and scarce refrained
Cursing her beauty to her face, as brothers

Might a shamed sister's,—'Had she been less fair
She were less wretched,'—how, evoking so
From congregated wrong and heaped despair
Of men and women writhing under blow,
Harrowed and hideous in a filthy lair
Some personating Image, wherein woe
Was wrapt in beauty from offending much,
They called it Cybele, or Niobe,
Or laid it corpse-like on a bier for such,
Where all the world might drop for Italy
Those cadenced tears which burn not where they touch,—
'Juliet of nations, canst thou die as we?
And was the violet crown that crowned thy head
So over-large, though new buds made it rough,
It slipped down and across thine eyelids dead,
O sweet, fair Juliet?' Of such songs enough,
Too many of such complaints! behold, instead,
Void at Verona, Juliet's marble trough.*
As void as that is, are all images
Men set between themselves and actual wrong,
To catch the weight of pity, meet the stress
Of conscience,—since 'tis easier to gaze long
On mournful masks, and sad effigies,
Than on real, live, weak creatures crushed by strong.

For me who stand in Italy to-day
Where worthier poets stood and sang before,
I kiss their footsteps, yet their words gainsay.
I can but muse in hope upon this shore
Of golden Arno as it shoots away
Through Florence' heart beneath her bridges four!

* They show at Verona, as the tomb of Juliet, an empty trough of stone.

Bent bridges, seeming to strain off like bows,
And tremble while the arrowy undertide
Shoots on and cleaves the marble as it goes,
And strikes up palace walls on either side,
And froths the cornice out in glittering rows,
With doors and windows quaintly multiplied,
And terrace-sweeps, and gazers upon all,
By whom if flower or kerchief were thrown out
From any lattice there, the same would fall
Into the river underneath no doubt,
It runs so close and fast 'twixt wall and wall.
How beautiful! the mountains from without
In silence listen for the word said next,
What word will men say,—here where Giotto planted
His campanile, like an unperplexed
Fine question Heaven-ward, touching the things granted
A noble people who, being greatly vexed
In act, in aspiration keep undaunted?
What word will God say? Michel's Night and Day
And Dawn and Twilight wait in marble scorn,*
Like dogs upon a dunghill, couched on clay
From whence the Mediccan stamp's outworn,
The final putting off of all such sway
By all such hands, and freeing of the unborn
In Florence and the great world outside Florence.
Three hundred years his patient statues wait
In that small chapel of the dim St. Lawrence.
Day's eyes are breaking bold and passionate
Over his shoulder, and will flash abhorrence

* These famous statues recline in the Sagrestia Nuova, on the tombs of Giuliano de' Medici, third son of Lorenzo the Magnificent, and Lorenzo of Urbino his grandson. Strozzi's epigram on the Night, with Michel Angelo's rejoinder, is well known.

On darkness and with level looks meet fate,
  When once loose from that marble film of theirs;
The night has wild dreams in her sleep, the Dawn
  Is haggard as the sleepless, Twilight wears
A sort of horror; as the veil withdrawn
  'Twixt the artist's soul and works had left them heirs
Of speechless thoughts which would not quail nor fawn,
  Of angers and contempts, of hope and love;
For not without a meaning did he place
  The princely Urbino on the seat above
With everlasting shadow on his face,
  While the slow dawns and twilights disapprove
The ashes of his long-extinguished race,
  Which nevermore shall clog the feet of men.
I do believe, divinest Angelo,
  That winter-hour, in Via Larga, when
They bade thee build a statue up in snow.*
  And straight that marvel of thine art again
Dissolved beneath the sun's Italian glow.
  Thine eyes, dilated with the plastic passion,
Thawing too, in drops of wounded manhood, since
  To mock alike thine art and indignation,
Laughed at the palace-window the new prince,—
  ('Aha! this genius needs for exaltation,
When all's said, and howe'er the proud may wince,
  A little marble from our princely mines!')
I do believe that hour thou laughedst too,
  For the whole sad world and for thy Florentines,
After those few tears—which were only few!

* This mocking task was set by Pietro, the unworthy successor of Lorenzo the Magnificent.

That, as beneath the sun, the grand white lines
Of thy snow-statue trembled and withdrew,—
The head, erect as Jove's being palsied first,
The eyelids flattened, the full brow turned blank,—
The right hand, raised but now as if it cursed,
Dropt, a mere snowball, (till the people sank
Their voices, though a louder laughter burst
From the royal window) thou couldst proudly thank
God and the prince for promise and presage,
And laugh the laugh back, I think verily,
Thine eyes being purged by tears of righteous rage
To read a wrong into a prophecy,
And measure a true great man's heritage
Against a mere great duke's posterity.
I think thy soul said then, 'I do not need
A princedom and its quarries, after all;
For if I write, paint, carve a word, indeed,
On book or board or dust, on floor or wall,
The same is kept of God, who taketh heed
That not a letter of the meaning fall
Or ere it touch and teach His world's deep heart,
Outlasting, therefore, all your lordships, sir!
So keep your stone, beseech you, for your part,
To cover up your grave-place and refer
The proper titles; *I* live by my art.
The thought I threw into this snow shall stir
This gazing people when their gaze is done;
And the tradition of your act and mine,
When all the snow is melted in the sun,
Shall gather up for unborn men, a sign
Of what is the true princedom,—ay, and none
Shall laugh that day, except the drunk with wine.'

Amen, great Angelo! the day's at hand.

If many laugh not on it, shall we weep?
Much more we must not, let us understand,
Through rhymers sonneteering in their sleep,
And archaists mumbling dry bones up the land,
And sketchers lauding ruined towns a-heap.—
Through all that drowsy hum of voices smooth,
The hopeful bird mounts carolling from brake,
The hopeful child, with leaps to catch his growth,
Sings open-eyed for liberty's sweet sake!
And I, a singer also, from my youth,
Prefer to sing with these who are awake,
With birds, with babes, with men who will not fear
The baptism of the holy morning dew,
(And many of such wakers now are here,
Complete in their anointed manhood, who
Will greatly dare and greatlier persevere,)
Than join those old thin voices with my new,
And sigh for Italy with some safe sigh
Cooped up in music 'twixt an oh and ah,—
Nay, hand in hand with that young child, will I
Go singing rather, '*Bella libertà*,'
Than, with those poets, croon the dead or cry
'*Se tu men bella fossi, Italia!*'

'Less wretched if less fair.' Perhaps a truth
Is so far plain in this—that Italy,
Long trammelled with the purple of her youth
Against her age's ripe activity,
Sits still upon her tombs, without death's ruth,
But also without life's brave energy.
'Now tell us what is Italy?' men ask:
And others answer, 'Virgil, Cicero,
Catullus, Cæsar.' What beside? to task
The memory closer—'Why, Boccaccio,

Dante, Petrarca,'—and if still the flask
Appears to yield its wine by drops too slow,—
'Angelo, Raffael, Pergolese,'—all
Whose strong hearts beat through stone, or charged again
The paints with fire of souls electrical,
Or broke up heaven for music. What more then?
Why, then, no more. The chaplet's last beads fall
In naming the last saintship within ken,
And, after that, none prayeth in the land.
Alas, this Italy has too long swept
Heroic ashes up for hour-glass sand;
Of her own past, impassioned nympholept!
Consenting to be nailed here by the hand
To the very bay-tree under which she stepped
A queen of old, and plucked a leafy branch.
And, licensing the world too long indeed
To use her broad phylacteries to staunch
And stop her bloody lips, she takes no heed
How one clear word would draw an avalanche
Of living sons around her, to succeed
The vanished generations. Can she count
These oil-eaters, with large, live, mobile mouths
Agape for maccaroni, in the amount
Of consecrated heroes of her south's
Bright rosary? The pitcher at the fount,
The gift of gods, being broken, she much loathes
To let the ground-leaves of the place confer
A natural bowl. So henceforth she would seem
No nation, but the poet's pensioner,
With alms from every land of song and dream,
While aye her pipers sadly pipe of her,
Until their proper breaths, in that extreme
Of sighing, split the reed on which they played!

Of which, no more. But never say 'no more'
To Italy's life. Her memories undismayed
Still argue 'evermore,'—her graves implore
Her future to be strong and not afraid;
Her very statues send their looks before.

We do not serve the dead—the past is past!
God lives, and lifts his glorious mornings up
Before the eyes of men, awake at last,
Who put away the meats they used to sup.
And down upon the dust of earth outcast
The dregs remaining of the ancient cup,
Then turn to wakeful prayer and worthy act.
The dead, upon their awful 'vantage ground,
The sun not in their faces,—shall abstract
No more our strength: we will not be discrowned
As guardians of their crowns; nor deign transact
A barter of the present, for a sound
Of good, so counted in the foregone days.
O Dead, ye shall no longer cling to us
With rigid hands of dessiccating praise,
And drag us backward by the garment thus,
To stand and laud you in long-drawn virelays!
We will not henceforth be oblivious
Of our own lives, because ye lived before,
Nor of our acts, because ye acted well.
We thank you that ye first unlatched the door,
But will not make it inaccessible
By thankings on the threshold any more.
We hurry onward to extinguish hell
With our fresh souls, our younger hope, and God's
Maturity of purpose. Soon shall we
Die also! and, that then our periods
Of life may round themselves to memory,

As smoothly as on our graves the burial-sods,
We now must look to it to excel as ye,
And bear our age as far, unlimited
By the last mind-mark! so, to be invoked
By future generations, as their Dead.

'Tis true that when the dust of death has choked
A great man's voice, the common words he said
Turn oracles,—the common thoughts he yoked
Like horses, draw like griffins!—this is true
And acceptable. I, too, should desire,
When men make record, with the flowers they strew,
'Savonarola's soul went out in fire
Upon our Grand-duke's piazza,* and burned through
A moment first, or ere he did expire,
The veil betwixt the right and wrong, and showed
How near God sate and judged the judges there,—'
Upon the self-same pavement overstrewed,
To cast my violets with as reverent care,
And prove that all the winters which have snowed
Cannot snow out the scent from stones and air,
Of a sincere man's virtues. This was he,
Savonarola, who, while Peter sank
With his whole boat-load, called courageously
'Wake Christ, wake Christ!'—Who, having tried the tank
Of old church-waters used for baptistry
Ere Luther came to spill them, swore they stank!

* Savonarola was burnt for his testimony against papal corruptions as early as March, 1498; and, as late as our own day, it has been a custom in Florence to strew with violets the pavement where he suffered, in grateful recognition of the anniversary.

Who also by a princely deathbed cried,
'Loose Florence, or God will not loose thy soul!'
Then fell back the Magnificent and died
Beneath the star-look, shooting from the cowl,
Which turned to wormwood bitterness the wide
Deep sea of his ambitions. It were foul
To grudge Savonarola and the rest
Their violets! rather pay them quick and fresh!
The emphasis of death makes manifest
The eloquence of action in our flesh:
And men who, living, were but dimly guessed,
When once free from their life's entangled mesh,
Show their full length in graves, or oft indeed
Exaggerate their stature, in the flat,
To noble admirations which exceed
Most nobly, yet will calculate in that
But accurately. We, who are the seed
Of buried creatures, if we turned and spat
Upon our antecedents, we were vile.
Bring violets rather! If these had not walked
Their furlong, could we hope to walk our mile?
Therefore bring violets. Yet if we, self-baulked,
Stand still, a-strewing violets all the while,
These moved in vain, of whom we have vainly talked.
So rise up henceforth with a cheerful smile,
And having strewn the violets, reap the corn,
And having reaped and garnered, bring the plough
And draw new furrows 'neath the healthy morn,
And plant the great Hereafter in this Now.

Of old 'twas so. How step by step was worn
As each man gained on each, securely!—how
Each by his own strength sought his own ideal,—
The ultimate Perfection leaning bright

From out the sun and stars, to bless the leal
And earnest search of all for Fair and Right,
Through doubtful forms, by earth accounted real!
Because old Jubal blew into delight
The souls of men, with clear-piped melodies,
If youthful Asaph were content at most
To draw from Jubal's grave, with listening eyes,
Traditionary music's floating ghost
Into the grass-grown silence, were it wise?
And was't not wiser, Jubal's breath being lost,
That Miriam clashed her cymbals to surprise
The sun between her white arms flung apart,
With new, glad, golden sounds? that David's strings
O'erflowed his hand with music from his heart?
So harmony grows full from many springs,
And happy accident turns holy art.

You enter, in your Florence wanderings,
The church of St. Maria Novella. Pass
The left stair, where at plague-time Macchiavel*
Saw One with set fair face as in a glass,
Dressed out against the fear of death and hell,
Rustling her silks in pauses of the mass,
To keep the thought off how her husband fell,
When she left home, stark dead across her feet,—
The stair leads up to what the Orgagnas save
Of Dante's dæmons; you, in passing it,
Ascend the right stair from the farther nave,
To muse in a small chapel scarcely lit
By Cimabue's Virgin. Bright and brave,
That picture was accounted, mark, of old.
A king stood bare before its sovran grace,†

* See his description of the plague in Florence.

† Charles of Anjou, in his passage through Florence, was per-

A reverent people shouted to behold
The picture, not the king, and even the place
Containing such a miracle, grew bold,
Named the Glad Borgo from that beauteous face--
Which thrilled the artist, after work, to think
His own ideal Mary-smile should stand
So very near him,—he, within the brink
Of all that glory, let in by his hand
With too divine a rashness! Yet none shrink
Who come to gaze here now—albeit 'twas planned
Sublimely in the thought's simplicity.
The Lady, throned in empyreal state,
Minds only the young babe upon her knee.
While sidelong angels bear the royal weight,
Prostrated meekly, smiling tenderly
Oblivion of their wings; the Child thereat
Stretching its hand like god. If any should,
Because of some stiff draperies and loose joints,
Gaze scorn down from the heights of Raffaelhood,
On Cimabue's picture,—Heaven anoints
The head of no such critic, and his blood
The poet's curse strikes full on and appoints
To ague and cold spasms for evermore.
A noble picture! worthy of the shout
Wherewith along the streets the people bore
Its cherub faces, which the sun threw out
Until they stooped and entered the church door!—
Yet rightly was young Giotto talked about,
Whom Cimabue found among the sheep,*

mitted to see this picture while yet in Cimabue's 'bottega.' The populace followed the royal visitor, and, from the universal delight and admiration, the quarter of the city in which the artist lived, was called 'Borgo Allegri.' The picture was carried in triumph to the church, and deposited there.

* How Cimabue found Giotto, the shepherd-boy, sketching a

And knew, as gods know gods, and carried home
To paint the things he had painted, with a deep
And fuller insight, and so overcome
His chapel-lady with a heavenlier sweep
Of light. For thus we mount into the sum
Of great things known or acted. I hold, too,
That Cimabue smiled upon the lad,
At the first stroke which passed what he could do,
Or else his Virgin's smile had never had
Such sweetness in't. All great men who foreknew
Their heirs in art, for art's sake have been glad,
And bent their old white heads as if uncrowned,
Fanatics of their pure ideals still
Far more than of their triumphs, which were found
With some less vehement struggle of the will.
If old Margheritone trembled, swooned,
And died despairing at the open sill
Of other men's achievements, (who achieved,
By loving art beyond the master!) he
Was old Margheritone, and conceived
Never, at first youth and most ecstasy,
A Virgin like that dream of one, which heaved
The death-sigh from his heart. If wistfully
Margheritone sickened at the smell
Of Cimabue's laurel, let him go!—
For Cimabue stood up very well
In spite of Giotto's—and Angelico,
The artist-saint, kept smiling in his cell
The smile with which he welcomed the sweet slow
Inbreak of angels, (whitening through the dim
That he might paint them!) while the sudden sense

ram of his flock upon a stone, is prettily told by Vasari, who also relates that the elder artist Margheritone died 'infastidito' of the successes of the new school.

Of Raffael's future was revealed to him
By force of his own fair works' competence.
The same blue waters where the dolphins swim
Suggest the tritons. Through the blue Immense,
Strike out, all swimmers! cling not in the way
Of one another, so to sink; but learn
The strong man's impulse, catch the fresh'ning spray
He throws up in his motions, and discern
By his clear, westering eye, the time of day.
Thou, God, hast set us worthy gifts to earn,
Besides thy heaven and Thee! and when I say
There's room here for the weakest man alive
To live and die,—there's room too, I repeat,
For all the strongest to live well, and strive
Their own way, by their individual heat,—
Like some new bee-swarm leaving the old hive,
Despite the wax which tempts so violet-sweet.
Then let the living live, the dead retain
Their grave-cold flowers!—though honour's best supplied,
By bringing actions, to prove their's not vain.

Cold graves, we say? it shall be testified
That living men who burn in heart and brain,
Without the dead, were colder. If we tried
To sink the past beneath our feet, be sure
The future would not stand. Precipitate
This old roof from the shrine—and, insecure,
The nesting swallows fly off, mate from mate.
How scant the gardens, if the graves were fewer!
The tall green poplars grew no longer straight,
Whose tops not looked to Troy. Would any fight
For Athens, and not swear by Marathon?

Who dared build temples, without tombs in sight?
Or live, without some dead man's benison?
Or seek truth, hope for good, and strive for right,
If, looking up, he saw not in the sun
Some angel of the martyrs all day long
Standing and waiting? Your last rhythm will need
Your earliest key-note. Could I sing this song,
If my dead masters had not taken heed
To help the heavens and earth to make me strong,
As the wind ever will find out some reed,
And touch it to such issues as belong
To such a frail thing? None may grudge the dead,
Libations from full cups. Unless we choose
To look back to the hills behind us spread,
The plains before us, sadden and confuse;
If orphaned, we are disinherited.

I would but turn these lachrymals to use,
And pour fresh oil in from the olive grove,
To furnish them as new lamps. Shall I say
What made my heart beat with exulting love,
A few weeks back?—
.... The day was such a day
As Florence owes the sun. The sky above,
Its weight upon the mountains seemed to lay,
And palpitate in glory, like a dove
Who has flown too fast, full-hearted!—take away
The image! for the heart of man beat higher
That day in Florence, flooding all her streets
And piazzas with a tumult and desire.
The people, with accumulated heats,
And faces turned one way, as if one fire
Both drew and flushed them, left their ancient beats,
And went up toward the palace-Pitti wall,

To thank their Grand-duke, who, not quite of course,
Had graciously permitted, at their call,
The citizens to use their civic force
To guard their civic homes. So, one and all,
The Tuscan cities streamed up to the source
Of this new good, at Florence, taking it
As good so far, presageful of more good.—
The first torch of Italian freedom, lit
To toss in the next tiger's face who should
Approach too near them in a greedy fit,—
The first pulse of an even flow of blood,
To prove the level of Italian veins
Toward rights perceived and granted. How we gazed
From Casa Guidi windows, while, in trains
Of orderly procession—banners raised,
And intermittent bursts of martial strains
Which died upon the shout, as if amazed
By gladness beyond music—they passed on!
The Magistracy, with insignia, passed,—
And all the people shouted in the sun,
And all the thousand windows which had cast
A ripple of silks, in blue and scarlet, down,
(As if the houses overflowed at last,)
Seemed growing larger with fair heads and eyes.
The Lawyers passed,—and still arose the shout,
And hands broke from the windows to surprise
Those grave calm brows with bay-tree leaves thrown out.
The Priesthood passed, the friars with worldly-wise
Keen sidelong glances from their beards about
The street to see who shouted! many a monk
Who takes a long rope in the waist, was there!
Whereat the popular exultation drunk
With indrawn 'vivas' the whole sunny air,

While, through the murmuring windows, rose and sunk
A cloud of kerchiefed hands,—'The church makes fair
Her welcome in the new Pope's name.' Ensued
The black sign of the 'Martyrs!' (name no name,
But count the graves in silence.) Next, were viewed
The Artists; next, the Trades, and after came
The People,—flag and sign, and rights as good,—
And very loud the shout was for that same
Motto, 'Il popolo.' Il Popolo,—
The word means dukedom, empire, majesty,
And kings in such an hour might read it so.
And next, with banners each in his degree,
Deputed representatives a-row
Of every separate state of Tuscany.
Siena's she wolf, bristling on the fold
Of the first flag, preceded Pisa's hare,
And Massa's lion floated calm in gold,
Pienza's following with his silver stare.
Arezzo's steed pranced clear from bridle-hold,—
And well might shout our Florence, greeting there
These, and more brethren. Last, the world had sent
The various children of her teeming flanks—
Greeks, English, French—as if to a parliament
Of lovers of her Italy in ranks,
Each bearing its land's symbol reverent.
At which the stones seemed breaking into thanks
And rattling up the sky, such sounds in proof
Arose; the very house-walls seemed to bend;
The very windows, up from door to roof,
Flashed out a rapture of bright heads, to mend
With passionate looks, the gesture's whirling off
A hurricane of leaves. Three hours did end
While all these passed; and ever in the crowd,

Rude men, unconscious of the tears that kept
Their beards moist, shouted; some few laughed
aloud,
And none asked any why they laughed and wept.
Friends kissed each other's cheeks, and foes long
vowed
More warmly did it,—two months' babies leapt
Right upward in their mother's arms, whose black,
Wide, glittering eyes look'd elsewhere: lovers press'd
Each before either, neither glancing back;
And peasant maidens, smoothly 'tired and tressed,
Forgot to finger on their throats the slack
Great pearl-strings; while old blind men would not
rest,
But pattered with their staves and slid their shoes
Along the stones, and smiled as if they saw.
O heaven, I think that day had noble use
Among God's days. So near stood Right and Law,
Both mutually forborne! Law would not bruise,
Nor Right deny, and each in reverent awe
Honoured the other. And if, ne'ertheless,
That good day's sun delivered to the vines
No charta, and the liberal Duke's excess
Did scarce exceed a Guelf's or Ghibelline's
In any special actual righteousness
Of what that day he granted, still the signs
Are good and full of promise, we must say,
When multitudes approach their kings with prayers
And kings concede their people's right to pray,
Both in one sunshine. Griefs are not despairs,
So uttered, nor can royal claims dismay
When men from humble homes and ducal chairs,
Hate wrong together. It was well to view
Those banners ruffled in a ruler's face

Inscribed, 'Live freedom, union, and all true
Brave patriots who are aided by God's grace!'
Nor was it ill, when Leopoldo drew
His little children to the window-place
He stood in at the Pitti, to suggest
They too should govern as the people willed.
What a cry rose then! some, who saw the best,
Declared his eyes filled up and overfilled
With good warm human tears which unrepressed
Ran down. I like his face; the forehead's build
Has no capacious genius, yet perhaps
Sufficient comprehension,—mild and sad,
And careful nobly,—not with care that wraps
Self-loving hearts, to stifle and make mad,
But careful with the care that shuns a lapse
Of faith and duty, studious not to add
A burden in the gathering of a gain.
And so, God save the Duke, I say with those
Who that day shouted it, and while dukes reign,
May all wear in the visible overflows
Of spirit, such a look of careful pain!
For God must love it better than repose.

And all the people who went up to let
Their hearts out to that Duke, as has been told—
Where guess ye that the living people met,
Kept tryst, formed ranks, chose leaders, first unrolled
Their banners?
In the Loggia? where is set
Cellini's godlike Perseus, bronze—or gold—
(How name the metal, when the statue flings
Its soul so in your eyes?) with brow and sword
Superbly calm, as all opposing things,

Slain with the Gorgon, were no more abhorred
Since ended?
No, the people sought no wings
From Perseus in the Loggia, nor implored
An inspiration in the place beside,
From that dim bust of Brutus, jagged and grand,
Where Buonarroti passionately tried
From out the close-clenched marble to demand
The head of Rome's sublimest homicide,—
Then dropt the quivering mallet from his hand,
Despairing he could find no model-stuff
Of Brutus, in all Florence, where he found
The gods and gladiators thick enough.
Nor there! the people chose still holier ground!
The people, who are simple, blind, and rough,
Know their own angels, after looking round.
Whom chose they then? where met they?

On the stone
Called Dante's,—a plain flat stone, scarce discerned
From others in the pavement,—whereupon
He used to bring his quiet chair out, turned
To Brunelleschi's church, and pour alone
The lava of his spirit when it burned.
It is not cold to-day. O passionate
Poor Dante, who, a banished Florentine,
Didst sit austere at banquets of the great,
And muse upon this far-off stone of thine,
And think how oft some passer used to wait
A moment, in the golden day's decline,
With 'Good night, dearest Dante?'—well, good night!
I muse now, Dante, and think, verily,
Though chapelled in the byeway, out of sight,
Ravenna's bones would thrill with ecstasy,

Could'st know thy favourite stone's elected right
As tryst-place for thy Tuscans to foresee
Their earliest chartas from. Good night, good morn,
Henceforward, Dante! now my soul is sure
That thine is better comforted of scorn,
And looks down earthward in completer cure,
Than when in Santa Croce church forlorn
Of any corpse, the architect and hewer
Did pile the empty marbles as thy tomb.*
For now thou art no longer exiled, now
Best honoured!—we salute thee who art come
Back to the old stone with a softer brow
Than Giotto drew upon the wall, for some
Good lovers of our age to track and plough†
Their way to, through time's ordures stratified,
And startle broad awake into the dull
Bargello chamber! now, thou'rt milder eyed,—
Now Beatrix may leap up glad to cull
Thy first smile, even in heaven and at her side,
Like that which, nine years old, looked beautiful
At May-game. What do I say? I only meant
That tender Dante loved his Florence well,
While Florence, now, to love him is content;
And, mark ye, that the piercingest sweet swell
Of love's dear incense by the living sent
To find the dead, is not accessible
To lazy livers! no narcotic,—not
Swung in a censer to a sleepy tune,—

* The Florentines, to whom the Ravennese refused the Body of Dante, (demanded of them 'in a late remorse of love') have given a cenotaph in this church to their divine poet. Something less than a grave.

† In allusion to Mr. Kirkup's discovery of Giotto's fresco-portrait of Dante.

But trod out in the morning air, by hot
  Quick spirits, who tread firm to ends foreshown,
And use the name of greatness unforgot,
  To meditate when greatness may be done.

For Dante sits in heaven, and ye stand here,
  And more remains for doing, all must feel,
Than trysting on his stone from year to year
  To shift processions, civic toe to heel.
The town's thanks to the Pitti. Are ye freer
  For what was felt that day? a chariot-wheel
May spin fast, yet the chariot never roll.
  But if that day suggested something good,
And bettered, with one purpose, soul by soul,—
  Better means freer. A land's brotherhood
Is most puissant: men, upon the whole,
  Are what they can be,—nations, what they would.

Will, therefore, to be strong, thou Italy!
  Will to be noble! Austrian Metternich
Can fix no yoke unless the neck agree;
  And thine is like the lion's when the thick
Dews shudder from it, and no man would be
  The stroker of his mane, much less would prick
His nostril with a reed. When nations roar
  Like lions, who shall tame them, and defraud
Of the due pasture by the river-shore?
  Roar, therefore! shake your dew-laps dry abroad,
The amphitheatre with open door
  Leads back upon the benchers, who applaud
The last spear-thruster.

Yet the Heavens forbid
  That we should call on passion to confront

The brutal with the brutal, and, amid
  This ripening world, suggest a lion's hunt
And lion's vengeance for the wrongs men did
  And do now, though the spears are getting blunt,
We only call, because the sight and proof
  Of lion-strength hurts nothing; and to show
A lion heart, and measure paw with hoof,
  Helps something, even, and will instruct a foe
As well as the onslaught, how to stand aloof!
  Or else the world gets past the mere brute blow
Or given or taken. Children use the fist
  Until they are of age to use the brain;
And so we needed Cæsars to assist
  Man's justice, and Napoleons to explain
God's counsel, when a point was nearly missed,
  Until our generations should attain
Christ's stature nearer. Not that we, alas,
  Attain already; but a single inch
Will raise to look down on the swordsman's pass,
  As knightly Roland on the coward's flinch;
And, after chloroform and ether-gas,
  We find out slowly what the bee and finch
Have ready found, through Nature's lamp in each,
  How to our races we may justify
Our individual claims, and, as we reach
  Our own grapes, bend the top vines to supply
The children's uses,—how to fill a breach
  With olive branches,—how to quench a lie
With truth, and smite a foe upon the cheek
  With Christ's most conquering kiss. Why, these
    are things
Worth a great nation's finding, to prove weak
  The 'glorious arms' of military kings.
And so with wide embrace, my England, seek

To stifle the bad heat and flickerings
Of this world's false and nearly expended fire!
Draw palpitating arrows to the wood,
And twang abroad thy high hopes, and thy higher
Resolves, from that most virtuous altitude!
Till nations shall unconsciously aspire
By looking up to thee, and learn that good
And glory are not different. Announce law
By freedom; exalt chivalry by peace;
Instruct how clear calm eyes can overawe,
And how pure hands, stretched simply to release
A bond-slave, will not need a sword to draw
To be held dreadful. O my England, crease
Thy purple with no alien agonies!
No struggles toward encroachment, no vile war!
Disband thy captains, change thy victories,
Be henceforth prosperous as the angels are,
Helping, not humbling.

Drums and battle cries
Go out in music of the morning star—
And soon we shall have thinkers in the place
Of fighters, each found able as a man
To strike electric influence through a race,
Unstayed by city-wall and barbican.
The poet shall look grander in the face
Than even of old, (when he of Greece began
To sing 'that Achillean wrath which slew
So many heroes,')—seeing he shall treat
The deeds of souls heroic toward the true—
The oracles of life—previsions sweet
And awful, like divine swans gliding through
White arms of Ledas, which will leave the heat

Of their escaping godship to endue
The human medium with a heavenly flush.

Meanwhile, in this same Italy we want
Not popular passion, to arise and crush,
But popular conscience, which may covenant
For what it knows. Concede without a blush,
To grant the 'civic guard' is not to grant
The civic spirit, living and awake.
Those lappets on your shoulders, citizens,
Your eyes strain after sideways till they ache,
(While still, in admirations and amens,
The crowd comes up on festa-days, to take
The great sight in)—are not intelligence,
Not courage even—alas, if not the sign
Of something very noble, they are nought;
For every day ye dress your sallow kine
With fringes down their cheeks, though unbesought
They loll their heavy heads and drag the wine,
And bear the wooden yoke as they were taught
The first day. What ye want is light—indeed
Not sunlight—(ye may well look up surprised
To those unfathomable heavens that feed
Your purple hills!)—but God's light organised
In some high soul, crowned capable to lead
The conscious people, conscious and advised,—
For if we lift a people like mere clay,
It falls the same. We want thee, O unfound
And sovran teacher!—if thy beard be grey
Or black, we bid thee rise up from the ground
And speak the word God giveth thee to say,
Inspiring into all this people round,
Instead of passion, thought, which pioneers
All generous passion, purifies from sin,

And strikes the hour for. Rise up, teacher! here's
A crowd to make a nation!—best begin
By making each a man, till all be peers
Of earth's true patriots and pure martyrs in
Knowing and daring. Best unbar the doors
Which Peter's heirs keep locked so overclose
They only let the mice across the floors,
While every churchman dangles, as he goes,
The great key at his girdle, and abhors
In Christ's name, meekly. Open wide the house,
Concede the entrance with Christ's liberal mind,
And set the tables with His wine and bread.
What! 'commune in both kinds?' In every kind—
Wine, water, love, hope, truth, unlimited,
Nothing kept back. For when a man is blind
To starlight, will he see the rose is red?
A bondsman shivering at a Jesuit's foot—
'Væ! meâ culpâ!' is not like to stand
A freedman at a despot's, and dispute
His titles by the balance in his hand,
Weighing them 'suo jure.' Tend the root
If careful of the branches, and expand
The inner souls of men before you strive
For civic heroes.

But the teacher, where?
From all these crowded faces, all alive,
Eyes, of their own lids flashing themselves bare,
And brows that with a mobile life contrive
A deeper shadow,—may we in no wise dare
To put a finger out, and touch a man,
And cry 'this is the leader?' What, all these!—
Broad heads, black eyes, yet not a soul that ran

From God down with a message? all, to please
The donna waving measures with her fan,
And not the judgment-angel on his knees,
(The trumpet just an inch off from his lips)
Who when he breathes next, will put out the sun?

Yet mankind's self were foundered in eclipse,
If lacking doers, with great works to be done;
And lo, the startled earth already dips
Back into light—a better day's begun—
And soon this leader, teacher, will stand plain,
And build the golden pipes and synthesize
This people-organ for a holy strain.
We hold this hope, and still in all these eyes,
Go sounding for the deep look which shall drain
Suffused thought into channelled enterprise.
Where is the teacher? What now may he do,
Who shall do greatly? Doth he gird his waist
With a monk's rope, like Luther? or pursue
The goat, like Tell? or dry his nets in haste,
Like Masaniello when the sky was blue?
Keep house, like other peasants, with inlaced,
Bare, brawny arms about a favourite child,
And meditative looks beyond the door,
(But not to mark the kidling's teeth have filed
The green shoots of his vine which last year bore
Full twenty bunches,) or, on triple-piled
Throne-velvets sit at ease, to bless the poor,
Like other pontiffs, in the Poorest's name?
The old tiara keeps itself aslope
Upon his steady brows, which, all the same,
Bend mildly to permit the people's hope?

Whatever hand shall grasp this oriflamme,

Whatever man (last peasant or first pope
  Seeking to free his country!) shall appear,
Teach, lead, strike fire into the masses, fill
  These empty bladders with fine air, insphere
These wills into a unity of will,
  And make of Italy a nation – dear
And blessed be that man! the Heavens shall kill
  No leaf the earth lets grow for him, and Death
Shall cast him back upon the lap of Life
  To live more surely, in a clarion-breath
Of hero-music. Brutus, with the knife,
  Rienzi, with the fasces, trod beneath
Rome's stones,—and more,—who threw away joy's life
  Like Pallas, that the beauty of their souls
Might ever shine untroubled and entire.
  But if it can be true that he who rolls
The Church's thunders, will reserve her fire
  For only light,—from eucharistic bowls
Will pour new life for nations that expire,
  And rend the scarlet of his papal vest
To gird the weak loins of his countrymen—
  I hold that he surpasses all the rest
Of Romans, heroes, patriots,—and that when
  He sat down on the throne, he dispossessed
The first graves of some glory. See again,
  This country-saving is a glorious thing;
And if a common man achieved it? well.
  Say, a rich man did? excellent. A king?
That grows sublime. A priest? improbable.
  A pope? Ah, there we stop, and cannot bring
Our faith up to the leap, with history's bell
  So heavy round the neck of it—albeit
We fain would grant the possibility,
  For *thy* sake, Pio Nono?

Stretch thy feet
In that case—I will kiss them reverently
As any pilgrim to the papal seat!
And, such proved possible, thy throne to me
Shall seem as holy a place as Pellico's
Venetian dungeon, or as Spielberg's grate,
At which the Lombard woman hung the rose
Of her sweet soul, by its own dewy weight,
To feel the dungeon round her sunshine close,
And pining so, died early, yet too late
For what she suffered. Yea, I will not choose
Betwixt thy throne, Pope Pius, and the spot
Marked red for ever, spite of rains and dews,
Where two fell riddled by the Austrian's shot,
The brothers Bandiera, who accuse,
With one same mother-voice and face (that what
They speak may be invincible) the sins
Of earth's tormentors before God the just,
Until the unconscious thunder-bolt begins
To loosen in His grasp.

And yet we must
Beware, and mark the natural kiths and kins
Of circumstance and office, and distrust
The rich man reasoning in a poor man's hut,
The poet who neglects pure truth to prove
Statistic fact, the child who leaves a rut
For a smoother road, the priest who vows his glove
Exhales no grace, the prince who walks a-foot,
The woman who has sworn she will not love,
And this Ninth Pius in Seventh Gregory's chair,
With Andrea Doria's forehead!

Count what goes

To making up a pope, before he wear
That triple crown. We pass the world wide throes
Which went to make the popedom,—the despair
Of free men, good men, wise men: the dread shows
Of women's faces, by the faggot's flash,
Tossed out, to the minutest stir and throb
O' the white lips, the least tremble of a lash,
To glut the red stare of a licensed mob;
The short mad cries down oubliettes, and plash
So horribly far off; priests, trained to rob,
And kings that, like encouraged nightmares, sate
On nations' hearts most heavily distressed
With monstrous sights and apohthegms of fate!—
We pass these things,—because 'the times' are prest
With necessary charges of the weight
Of all this sin, and 'Calvin, for the rest,
Made bold to burn Servetus—Ah, men err!'—
And, so do *churches!* which is all we mean
To bring to proof in any register
Of theological fat kine and lean—
So drive them back into the pens! refer
Old sins (with pourpoint, 'quotha' and 'I ween,')
Entirely to the old times, the old times;
Nor ever ask why this preponderant,
Infallible, pure Church could set her chimes
Most loudly then, just then,—most jubilant,
Precisely then—when mankind stood in crimes
Full heart-deep, and Heaven's judgments were not
scant.
Inquire still less, what signifies a church
Of perfect inspiration and pure laws,
Who burns the first man with a brimstone-torch,
And grinds the second, bone by bone, because
The times, forsooth, are used to rack and scorch!

What *is* a holy Church unless she awes
The times down from their sins? Did Christ select
Such amiable times, to come and teach
Love to, and mercy? The whole world were wrecked,
If every mere great man, who lives to reach
A little leaf of popular respect,
Attained not simply by some special breach
In the age's customs, by some precedence
In thought and act, which, having proved him higher
Than those he lived with, proved his competence
In helping them to wonder and aspire.

My words are guiltless of the bigot's sense.
My soul has fire to mingle with the fire
Of all these souls, within or out of doors
Of Rome's church or another. I believe
In one Priest, and one temple, with its floors
Of shining jasper gloom'd at morn and eve
By countless knees of earnest auditors,
And crystal walls, too lucid to perceive,
That none may take the measure of the place
And say, 'So far the porphyry, then, the flint—
To this mark, mercy goes, and there, ends grace,'
Though still the permeable crystals hint
At some white starry distance, bathed in space.
I feel how nature's ice-crusts keep the dint
Of undersprings of silent Deity.
I hold the articulated gospels, which
Show Christ among us, crucified on tree.
I love all who love truth, if poor or rich
In what they have won of truth possessively.
No altars and no hands defiled with pitch
Shall scare me off, but I will pray and eat

With all these—taking leave to choose my ewers
And say at last, 'Your visible churches cheat
Their inward types,—and, if a church assures
Of standing without failure and defeat,
The same both fails and lies.'
To leave which lures
Of wider subject through past years,—behold,
We come back from the popedom to the pope.
To ponder what he *must* be, ere we are bold
For what he *may* be, with our heavy hope
To trust upon his soul. So, fold by fold,
Explore this mummy in the priestly cope,
Transmitted through the darks of time, to catch
The man within the wrappage, and discern
How he, an honest man, upon the watch
Full fifty years, for what a man may learn,
Contrived to get just there; with what a snatch
Of old-world oboli he had to earn
The passage through; with what a drowsy sop
To drench the busy barkings of his brain;
What ghosts of pale tradition, wreathed with hop
'Gainst wakeful thought, he had to entertain
For heavenly visions; and consent to stop
The clock at noon, and let the hour remain
(Without vain windings up) inviolate,
Against all chimings from the belfry. Lo,
From every given pope you must abate,
Albeit you love him, some things—good, you know—
Which every given heretic you hate,
Assumes for his, as being plainly so.
A pope must hold by popes a little,—yes,
By councils,—from Nicæ up to Trent,—
By hierocratic empire, more or less
Irresponsible to men,—he must resent

Each man's particular conscience, and repress
Inquiry, meditation, argument,
As tyrant's faction. Also, he must not
Love truth too dangerously, but prefer
'The interests of the Church,' (because a blot
Is better than a rent, in miniver)
Submit to see the people swallow hot
Husk-porridge, which his chartered churchmen stir
Quoting the only true God's epigraph,
'Feed my lambs, Peter!'—must consent to sit
Attesting with his pastoral ring and staff,
To such a picture of our Lady, hit
Off well by artist angels, (though not half
As fair as Giotto would have painted it)—
To such a vial, where a dead man's blood
Runs yearly warm beneath a churchman's finger;
To such a holy house of stone and wood,
Whereof a cloud of angels was the bringer
From Bethlehem to Loreto.—Were it good
For any pope on earth to be a flinger
Of stones against these high-niched counterfeits?
Apostates only are iconoclasts.
He dares not say, while this false thing abets
That true thing, 'this is false.' He keeps his fasts
And prayers, as prayer and fast were silver frets
To change a note upon a string that lasts,
And make a lie a virtue. Now, if he
Did more than this, higher hoped, and braver dared,
I think he were a pope in jeopardy,
Or no pope rather, for his truth had barred
The vaulting of his life,—and certainly,
If he do only this, mankind's regard
Moves on from him at once, to seek some new
Teacher and leader. He is good and great

According to the deeds a pope can do;
Most liberal, save those bonds; affectionate,
As princes may be, and, as priests are, true;
But only the ninth Pius after eight,
When all's praised most. At best and hopefullest,
He's pope—we want a man! his heart beats warm,
But, like the prince enchanted to the waist,
He sits in stone, and hardens by a charm
Into the marble of his throne high-placed.
Mild benediction, waves his saintly arm—
So, good! but what we want's a perfect man,
Complete and all alive: half travertine
Half suits our need, and ill subserves our plan.
Feet, knees, nerves, sinews, energies divine
Were never yet too much for men who ran
In such hard ways as must be this of thine.
Deliverer whom we seek, whoe'er thou art,
Pope, prince, or peasant! If, indeed, the first,
The noblest, therefore! since the heroic heart
Within thee must be great enough to burst
Those trammels buckling to the baser part
Thy saintly peers in Rome, who crossed and cursed
With the same finger.

Come, appear, be found,
If pope or peasant, come! we hear the cock,
The courtier of the mountains when first crowned
With golden dawn; and orient glories flock
To meet the sun upon the highest ground.
Take voice and work! we wait to hear thee knock
At some one of our Florentine nine gates,
On each of which was imaged a sublime
Face of a Tuscan genius, which, for hate's
And love's sake, both, our Florence in her prime

Turned boldly on all comers to her states.
As heroes turned their shields in antique time,
Emblazoned with honourable acts. And though
The gates are blank now of such images,
And Petrarch looks no more from Nicolo
Toward dear Arezzo, 'twixt the acacia-trees,
Nor Dante, from gate Gallo—still we know,
Despite the razing of the blazonries,
Remains the consecration of the shield!
The dead heroic faces will start out
On all these gates, if foes should take the field,
And blend sublimely, at the earliest shout,
With living heroes who will scorn to yield
A hair's-breadth even, when, gazing round about,
They find in what a glorious company
They fight the foes of Florence. Who will grudge
His one poor life, when that great man we see
Has given five hundred years, the world being judge,
To help the glory of his Italy?
Who, born the fair side of the Alps, will budge,
When Dante stays, when Ariosto stays,
When Petrarch stays for ever? Ye bring swords,
My Tuscans? Ay, if wanted in this haze,
Bring swords. But first bring souls!—bring thoughts and words,
Unrusted by a tear of yesterday's,
Yet awful by its wrong,—and cut these cords,
And mow this green lush falseness to the roots,
And shut the mouth of hell below the swathe!
And, if ye can bring songs too, let the lute's
Recoverable music softly bathe
Some poet's hand, that, through all bursts and bruits
Of popular passion, all unripe and rathe

Convictions of the popular intellect,
Ye may not lack a finger up the air,
Annunciative, reproving, pure, erect,
To show which way your first Ideal bear
The whiteness of its wings, when (sorely pecked
By falcons on your wrists) it unaware
Arose up overhead, and out of sight.

Meanwhile, let all the far ends of the world
Breathe back the deep breath of their old delight,
To swell the Italian banner just unfurled.
Help, lands of Europe! for, if Austria fight,
The drums will bar your slumber. Had ye curled
The laurel for your thousand artists' brows,
If these Italian hands had planted none?
Can any sit down idle in the house,
Nor hear appeals from Buonarroti's stone
And Raffael's canvas, rousing and to rouse?
Where's Poussin's master? Gallic Avignon
Bred Laura, and Vaucluse's fount has stirred
The heart of France too strongly, as it lets
Its little stream out, (like a wizard's bird
Which bounds upon its emerald wing and wets
The rocks on each side) that she should not gird
Her loins with Charlemagne's sword when foes beset
The country of her Petrarch. Spain may well
Be minded how from Italy she caught,
To mingle with her tinkling Moorish bell,
A fuller cadence and a subtler thought.
And even the New World, the receptacle
Of freemen, may send glad men, as it ought,
To greet Vespucci Amerigo's door.
While England claims, by trump of poetry,
Verona, Venice, the Ravenna-shore,

And dearer holds John Milton's Fiesole
Than Langlande's Malvern with the stars in flower.

And Vallombrosa, we too went to see
Last June, beloved companion,—where sublime
The mountains live in holy families,
And the slow pinewoods ever climb and climb
Half up their breasts, just stagger as they seize
Some grey crag, drop back with it many a time,
And straggle blindly down the precipice!
The Vallombrosan brooks were strewn as thick
That June-day, knee-deep, with dead beechen leaves,
As Milton saw them, ere his heart grew sick
And his eyes blind. I think the monks and beeves
Are all the same too. Scarce they have changed the wick
On good St. Gualbert's altar, which receives
The convent's pilgrims,—and the pool in front
(Wherein the hill-stream trout are cast, to wait
The beatific vision and the grunt
Used at refectory) keeps its weedy state,
To baffle saintly abbots who would count
The fish across their breviary nor 'bate
The measure of their steps. O waterfalls
And forests! sound and silence! mountains bare,
That leap up peak by peak, and catch the palls
Of purple and silver mist to rend and share
With one another, at electric calls
Of life in the sunbeams,—till we cannot dare
Fix your shapes, count your number! we must think
Your beauty and your glory helped to fill
The cup of Milton's soul so to the brink,
He never more was thirsty, when God's will

Had shattered to his sense the last chain-link
By which he had drawn from Nature's visible
The fresh well-water. Satisfied by this,
He sang of Adam's paradise and smiled,
Remembering Vallombrosa. Therefore is
The place divine to English man and child,
And pilgrims leave their souls here in a kiss.

For Italy's the whole earth's treasury, piled
With reveries of gentle ladies, flung
Aside, like ravelled silk, from life's worn stuff;
With coins of scholars' fancy, which, being rung
On work-day counter, still sound silver-proof;
In short, with all the dreams of dreamers young,
Before their heads have time for slipping off
Hope's pillow to the ground. How oft, indeed,
We've sent our souls out from the rigid north,
On bare white feet which would not print nor bleed,
To climb the Alpine passes and look forth,
Where booming low the Lombard rivers lead
To gardens, vineyards, all a dream is worth,—
Sights, thou and I, Love, have seen afterward
From Tuscan Bellosguardo, wide awake,*
When, standing on the actual blessed sward
Where Galileo stood at nights to take
The vision of the stars, we have found it hard,
Gazing upon the earth and heaven, to make
A choice of beauty.

Therefore let us all

* Galileo's villa, close to Florence, is built on an eminence called Bellosguardo.

Refreshed in England or in other land,
By visions, with their fountain-rise and fall,
Of this earth's darling.—we, who understand
A little how the Tuscan musical
Vowels do round themselves as if they planned
Eternities of separate sweetness.—we,
Who loved Sorrento vines in picture-book,
Or ere in wine-cup we pledged faith or glee,—
Who loved Rome's wolf, with demi-gods at suck,
Or ere we loved truth's own divinity,—
Who loved, in brief, the classic hill and brook,
And Ovid's dreaming tales, and Petrarch's song,
Or ere we loved Love's self even!—let us give
The blessing of our souls, (and wish them strong
To bear it to the height where prayers arrive,
When faithful spirits pray against a wrong,)
To this great cause of southern men, who strive
In God's name for man's rights, and shall not fail.

Behold, they shall not fail. The shouts ascend
Above the shrieks, in Naples, and prevail.
Rows of shot corpses, waiting for the end
Of burial, seem to smile up straight and pale
Into the azure air and apprehend
That final gun-flash from Palermo's coast
Which lightens their apocalypse of death.
So let them die! The world shows nothing lost;
Therefore, not blood. Above or underneath,
What matter, brothers, if ye keep your post
On duty's side? As sword returns to sheath,
So dust to grave, but souls find place in Heaven.
Heroic daring is the true success,
The eucharistic bread requires no leaven;

And though your ends were hopeless, we should bless
Your cause as holy. Strive—and, having striven,
Take, for God's recompense, that righteousness!

PART II.

I WROTE a meditation and a dream,
Hearing a little child sing in the street.
I leant upon his music as a theme,
Till it gave way beneath my heart's full beat,
Which tried at an exultant prophecy
But dropped before the measure was complete—
Alas, for songs and hearts! O Tuscany,
O Dante's Florence, is the type too plain?
Didst thou, too, only sing of liberty,
As little children take up a high strain
With unintentioned voices, and break off
To sleep upon their mother's knees again?
Could'st thou not watch one hour? then, sleep enough—
That sleep may hasten manhood, and sustain
The faint pale spirit with some muscular stuff.

But we, who cannot slumber as thou dost,
We thinkers, who have thought for thee and failed,
We hopers, who have hoped for thee and lost,
We poets, wandered round by dreams,* who hailed
From this Atrides' roof (with lintel-post
Which still drips blood,—the worst part hath prevailed)

* See the opening passage of the Agamemnon of Æschylus.

The fire-voice of the beacons, to declare
Troy taken, sorrow ended,—cozened through
A crimson sunset in a misty air,—
What now remains for such as we, to do?
God's judgments, peradventure, will He bare
To the roots of thunder, if we kneel and sue?

From Casa Guidi windows I looked forth,
And saw ten thousand eyes of Florentines
Flash back the triumph of the Lombard north,—
Saw fifty banners, freighted with the signs
And exultations of the awakened earth,
Float on above the multitude in lines,
Straight to the Pitti. So, the vision went.
And so, between those populous rough hands
Raised in the sun, Duke Leopold outleant,
And took the patriot's oath, which henceforth stands
Among the oaths of perjurers, eminent
To catch the lightnings ripened for these lands.

Why swear at all, thou false Duke Leopold?
What need to swear? What need to boast thy blood
Unspoilt of Austria, and thy heart unsold
Away from Florence? It was understood
God made thee not too vigorous or too bold;
And men had patience with thy quiet mood,
And women, pity, as they saw thee pace
Their festive streets with premature grey hairs.
We turned the mild dejection of thy face
To princely meanings, took thy wrinkling cares
For ruffling hopes, and called thee weak, not base.
Nay, better light the torches for more prayers
And smoke the pale Madonnas at the shrine,

Being still 'our poor Grand-duke, our good Grand-
duke,
'Who cannot help the Austrian in his line,'—
Than write an oath upon a nation's book
For men to spit at with scorn's blurring brine!
Who dares forgive what none can overlook?

For me, I do repent me in this dust
Of towns and temples, which makes Italy,—
I sigh amid the sighs which breathe a gust
Of dying century to century
Around us on the uneven crater-crust
Of these old worlds,—I bow my soul and knee!
Absolve me, patriots, of my woman's fault
That ever I believed the man was true!—
These sceptred strangers shun the common salt,
And, therefore, when the general board's in view,
And they stand up to carve for blind and halt,
The wise suspect the viands which ensue.
I much repent that, in this time and place,
Where many corpse-lights of experience burn
From Cæsar's and Lorenzo's festering race,
To enlighten groping reasoners, I could learn
No better counsel for a simple case,
Than to put faith in princes, in my turn.
Had all the death-piles of the ancient years
Flared up in vain before me? knew I not
What stench arises from some purple gears?
And how the sceptres witness whence they got
Their briar-wood, crackling through the atmos-
phere's
Foul smoke, by princely perjuries, kept hot?
Forgive me, ghosts of patriots,—Brutus, thou
Who trailest downhill into life again

Thy blood-weighed cloak, to indict me with thy
slow
Reproachful eyes!—for being taught in vain
That, while the illegitimate Cæsars show
Of meaner stature than the first full strain,
(Confessed incompetent to conquer Gaul)
They swoon as feebly and cross Rubicons
As rashly as any Julius of them all!
Forgive, that I forgot the mind which runs
Through absolute races, too unsceptical!
I saw the man among his little sons,
His lips were warm with kisses while he swore,—
And I because I am a woman, I,
Who felt my own child's coming life before
The prescience of my soul, and held faith high,—
I could not bear to think, whoever bore,
That lips, so warmed, could shape so cold a lie.

From Casa Guidi windows I looked out,
Again looked, and beheld a different sight.
The Duke had fled before the people's shout
'Long live the Duke!' A people, to speak right,
Must speak as soft as courtiers, lest a doubt
Should curdle brows of gracious sovereigns, white.
Moreover that same dangerous shouting meant
Some gratitude for future favours, which
Were only promised, the Constituent
Implied, the whole being subject to the hitch
In 'motu proprios,' very incident
To all these Czars, from Paul to Paulovitch.
Whereat the people rose up in the dust
Of the ruler's flying feet, and shouted still
And loudly, only, this time, as was just,
Not 'Live the Duke,' who had fled, for good or ill,

But 'Live the people,' who remained and must,
The unrenounced and unrenounceable.

Long live the people! How they lived! and boiled
And bubbled in the cauldron of the street.
How the young blustered, nor the old recoiled,—
And what a thunderous stir of tongues and feet
Trod flat the palpitating bells, and foiled
The joy-guns of their echo, shattering it!
How down they pulled the Duke's arms everywhere!
How up they set new café-signs, to show
Where patriots might sip ices in pure air—
(The fresh paint smelling somewhat.) To and fro
How marched the civic guard, and stopped to stare
When boys broke windows in a civic glow.
How rebel songs were sung to loyal tunes,
And bishops cursed in ecclesiastic metres.
How all the Circoli grew large as moons,
And all the speakers, moonstruck,—thankful greeters
Of prospects which struck poor the ducal boons, . .
A mere free press, and Chambers!—frank repeaters
Of great Guerazzi's praises. . . . 'There's a man,
The father of the land!—who, truly great,
Takes off that national disgrace and ban,
The farthing tax upon our Florence-gate,
And saves Italia as he only can.'
How all the nobles fled, and would not wait,
Because they were most noble,—which being so,
How liberals vowed to burn their palaces,
Because free Tuscans were not free to go.
How grown men raged at Austria's wickedness,
And smoked,—while fifty striplings in a row
Marched straight to Piedmont for the wrong's redress!

You say we failed in duty, we who wore
Black velvet like Italian democrats,
Who slashed our sleeves like patriots, nor forswore
The true republic in the form of hats?
We chased the archbishop from the Duomo door—
We chalked the walls with bloody caveats
Against all tyrants. If we did not fight
Exactly, we fired muskets up the air,
To show that victory was ours of right.
We met, had free discussion everywhere
(Except perhaps i' the Chambers) day and night.
We proved the poor should be employed, . . . that's fair,—
And yet the rich not worked for anywise,—
Pay certified, yet payers abrogated,—
Full work secured, yet liabilities
To over-work excluded,—not one bated
Of all our holidays, that still, at twice
Or thrice a-week, are moderately rated.
We proved that Austria was dislodged, or would
Or should be, and that Tuscany in arms
Should, would, dislodge her, ending the old feud;
And yet to leave our piazzas, shops, and farms,
For the simple sake of fighting, was not good—
We proved that also. 'Did we carry charms
Against being killed ourselves, that we should rush
On killing others? what! desert herewith
Our wives and mothers?—was that duty? tush!'
At which we shook the sword within the sheath,
Like heroes—only louder; and the flush
Ran up the cheek to meet the future wreath.
Nay, what we proved, we shouted—how we shouted,
(Especially the boys did) boldly planting

That tree of liberty, whose fruit is doubted,
Because the roots are not of nature's granting.
A tree of good and evil!—none, without it,
Grow gods!—alas, and, with it, men are wanting!

O holy knowledge, holy liberty,
O holy rights of nations! If I speak
These bitter things against the jugglery
Of days that in your names proved blind and weak,
It is that tears are bitter. When we see
The brown skulls grin at death in churchyards bleak,
We do not cry, 'This Yorick is too light,'
For death grows deathlier with that mouth he makes.
So with my mocking. Bitter things I write,
Because my soul is bitter for your sakes,
O freedom! O my Florence!

Men who might
Do greatly in a universe that breaks
And burns, must ever *know* before they do.
Courage and patience are but sacrifice;
And sacrifice is offered for and to
Something conceived of. Each man pays a price
For what himself counts precious, whether true
Or false the appreciation it implies.
But here,—no knowledge, no conception, nought!
Desire was absent, that provides great deeds
From out the greatness of prevenient thought.
And action, action, like a flame that needs
A steady breath and fuel, being caught
Up, like a burning reed from other reeds,
Flashed in the empty and uncertain air,
Then wavered, then went out. Behold, who blames
A crooked course, when not a goal is there,

To round the fervid striving of the games?
An ignorance of means may minister
To greatness, but an ignorance of aims
Makes it impossible to be great at all.
So, with our Tuscans! Let none dare to say,
'Here virtue never can be national.
Here fortitude can never cut a way
Between the Austrian muskets, out of thrall.'
I tell you rather, that, whoever may
Discern true ends here, shall grow pure enough
To love them, brave enough to strive for them,
And strong to reach them, though the roads be rough!
That having learnt—by no mere apophthegm—
Not just the draping of a graceful stuff
About a statue, broidered at the hem,—
Not just the trilling on an opera stage,
Of 'libertà' to bravos—(a fair word,
Yet too allied to inarticulate rage
And breathless sobs, for singing, though the chord
Were deeper than they struck it!) but the gauge
Of civil wants sustained, and wrongs abhorred,—
The serious, sacred meaning and full use
Of freedom for a nation,—then, indeed,
Our Tuscans, underneath the bloody dews
Of some new morning, rising up agreed
And bold, will want no Saxon souls or thews,
To sweep their piazzas clear of Austria's breed.

Alas, alas! it was not so this time.
Conviction was not, courage failed, and truth
Was something to be doubted of. The mime
Changed masks because a mime. The tide as smooth
In running in as out, no sense of crime

Because no sense of virtue, sudden ruth
Seized on the people.—They would have again
Their good Grand-duke, and leave Guerazzi, though
He took that tax from Florence. 'Much in vain
He takes it from the market-carts, we trow,
While urgent that no market-men remain,
But all march off and leave the spade and plough,
To die among the Lombards. Was it thus
The dear paternal Duke did? Live the Duke!'
At which the joy-bells multitudinous,
Swept by an opposite wind, as loudly shook.
Call back the mild archbishop to his house,
To bless the people with his frightened look,—
He shall not yet be hanged, you comprehend.
Seize on Guerazzi! guard him in full view,
Or else we stab him in the back to end.
Rub out those chalked devices! set up new!
The Duke's arms! doff your Phrygian caps; and mend
The pavement of the piazzas broke into
By barren poles of freedom; smooth the way
For the ducal carriage, lest his highness sigh
'Here trees of liberty grew yesterday.'
'Long live the Duke!'—How roared the cannonry,
How rocked the bell-towers, and through thickening spray
Of nosegays, wreaths, and kerchiefs tossed on high,
How marched the civic guard, the people still
Being good at shouts,—especially the boys.
Alas, poor people, of an unfledged will
Most fitly expressed by such a callow voice!
Alas, still poorer Duke, incapable
Of being worthy even of so much noise!

You think he came back instantly, with thanks
And tears in his faint eyes, and hands extended
To stretch the franchise through their utmost ranks?
That having, like a father, apprehended,
He came to pardon fatherly those pranks
Played out, and now in filial service ended?—
That some love-token, like a prince, he threw,
To meet the people's love-call, in return?
Well, how he came I will relate to you;
And if your hearts should burn, why, hearts *must* burn,
To make the ashes which things old and new
Shall be washed clean in—as this Duke will learn.

From Casa Guidi windows, gazing, then,
I saw and witness how the Duke came back.
The regular tramp of horse and tread of men
Did smite the silence like an anvil black
And sparkless. With her wide eyes at full strain,
Our Tuscan nurse exclaimed, 'Alack, alack,
Signora! these shall be the Austrians.' 'Nay,
Be still,' I answered, 'do not wake the child!'
—For so, my two-months' baby sleeping lay
In milky dreams upon the bed and smiled,
And I thought, 'he shall sleep on, while he may,
Through the world's baseness. Not being yet defiled,
Why should he be disturbed by what is done?'
Then, gazing, I beheld the long-drawn street
Live out, from end to end, full in the sun,
With Austria's thousands. Sword and bayonet,
Horse, foot, artillery,—cannons rolling on,
Like blind slow storm-clouds gestant with the heat
Of undeveloped lightnings, each bestrode

By a single man, dust-white from head to heel,
  Indifferent as the dreadful thing he rode,
Like a sculptured Fate serene and terrible.
  As some smooth river which has overflowed,
Will slow and silent down its current wheel
  A loosened forest, all the pines erect,—
So, swept, in mute significance of storm,
  The marshalled thousands,—not an eye deflect
To left or right, to catch a novel form
  Of Florence city adorned by architect
And carver, or of Beauties live and warm
  Scared at the casements!—all, straightforward eyes
And faces, held as stedfast as their swords,
  And cognisant of acts, not imageries.
The key, O Tuscans, too well fits the wards!
  Ye asked for mimes,—these bring you tragedies.
For purple,—these shall wear it as your lords.
  Ye played like children,—die like innocents.
Ye mimicked lightnings with a torch,—the crack
  Of the actual bolt, your pastime, circumvents.
Ye called up ghosts, believing they were slack
  To follow any voice from Gilboa's tents,..
Here's Samuel!—and, so, Grand-dukes come back!

  And yet, they are no prophets though they come.
That awful mantle, they are drawing close,
  Shall be searched, one day, by the shafts of Doom
Through double folds now hoodwinking the brows.
  Resuscitated monarchs disentomb
Grave-reptiles with them, in their new life-throes.
  Let such beware. Behold, the people waits,
Like God. As He, in his serene of might,
  So they, in their endurance of long straits.
Ye stamp no nation out, though day and night,

Ye tread them with that absolute heel which grates
And grinds them flat from all attempted height.
You kill worms sooner with a garden-spade
Than you kill peoples: peoples will not die;
The tail curls stronger when you lop the head;
They writhe at every wound and multiply,
And shudder into a heap of life that's made
Thus vital from God's own vitality.
'Tis hard to shrivel back a day of God's
Once fixed for judgment: 'tis as hard to change
The people's, when they rise beneath their loads
And heave them from their backs with violent wrench,
To crush the oppressor!—for that judgment-rod's
The measure of this popular revenge.

Meantime, from Casa Guidi windows, we
Beheld the armament of Austria flow
Into the drowning heart of Tuscany.
And yet none wept, none cursed, or, if 'twas so,
They wept and cursed in silence. Silently
Our noisy Tuscans watched the invading foe;
They had learnt silence. Pressed against the wall,
And grouped upon the church-steps opposite,
A few pale men and women stared at all!
God knows what they were feeling, with their white
Constrained faces, they, so prodigal
Of cry and gesture when the world goes right,
Or wrong indeed. But here, was depth of wrong,
And here, still water; they were silent here;
And through that sentient silence, struck along
That measured tramp from which it stood out clear,
Distinct the sound and silence, like a gong
At midnight, each by the other awfuller,—

While every soldier in his cap displayed
A leaf of olive. Dusty, bitter thing!
Was such plucked at Novara, is it said?

A cry is up in England, which doth wring
The hollow world through, that for ends of trade
And virtue, and God's better worshipping,
We henceforth should exalt the name of Peace,
And leave those rusty wars that eat the soul,—
Besides their clippings at our golden fleece.
I, too, have loved peace, and from bole to bole
Of immemorial, undeciduous trees,
Would write, as lovers use, upon a scroll,
The holy name of Peace, and set it high
Where none could pluck it down. On trees, I say,—
Not upon gibbets!—With the greenery
Of dewy branches and the flowery May,
Sweet mediation betwixt earth and sky
Providing, for the shepherd's holiday.
Not upon gibbets!—though the vulture leaves
The bones to quiet, which he first picked bare.
Not upon dungeons! though the wretch who grieves
And groans within, less stirs the outer air
Than any little field-mouse stirs the sheaves.
Not upon chain-bolts! though the slave's despair
Has dulled his helpless, miserable brain,
And left him blank beneath the freeman's whip,
To sing and laugh out idiocies of pain.
Nor yet on starving homes! where many a lip
Has sobbed itself asleep through curses vain.
I love no peace which is not fellowship,
And which includes not mercy. I would have
Rather, the raking of the guns across

The world, and shrieks against Heaven's architrave;
Rather, the struggle in the slippery fosse
Of dying men and horses, and the wave
Blood-bubbling.... Enough said!—by Christ's own cross,
And by this faint heart of my womanhood,
Such things are better than a Peace that sits
Beside a hearth in self-commended mood,
And takes no thought how wind and rain by fits
Are howling out of doors against the good
Of the poor wanderer. What! your peace admits
Of outside anguish while it keeps at home?
I loathe to take its name upon my tongue.
'Tis nowise peace. 'Tis treason, stiff with doom,—
'Tis gagged despair, and inarticulate wrong,
Annihilated Poland, stifled Rome,
Dazed Naples, Hungary fainting 'neath the thong,
And Austria wearing a smooth olive-leaf
On her brute forehead, while her hoofs outpress
The life from these Italian souls, in brief.
O Lord of Peace, who art Lord of Righteousness,
Constrain the anguished worlds from sin and grief,
Pierce them with conscience, purge them with redress,
And give us peace which is no counterfeit!

But wherefore should we look out any more
From Casa Guidi windows? Shut them straight,
And let us sit down by the folded door,
And veil our saddened faces, and, so, wait
What next the judgment-heavens make ready for.
I have grown too weary of these windows. Sights
Come thick enough and clear enough in thought,
Without the sunshine; souls have inner lights.

And since the Grand-duke has come back and brought
This army of the North which thus requites
His filial South, we leave him to be taught.
His South, too, has learnt something certainly,
Whereof the practice will bring profit soon;
And peradventure other eyes may see,
From Casa Guidi windows, what is done
Or undone. Whatsoever deeds they be,
Pope Pius will be glorified in none.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—it shall top
Some heights of sorrow. Peter's rock, so named,
Shall lure no vessel any more to drop
Among the breakers. Peter's chair is shamed
Like any vulgar throne, the nations lop
To pieces for their firewood unreclaimed,—
And, when it burns too, we shall see as well
In Italy as elsewhere. Let it burn.
The cross, accounted still adorable,
Is Christ's cross only!—if the thief's would earn
Some stealthy genuflexions, we rebel;
And here the impenitent thief's has had its turn,
As God knows; and the people on their knees
Scoff and toss back the croziers, stretched like yokes
To press their heads down lower by degrees.
So Italy, by means of these last strokes,
Escapes the danger which preceded these,
Of leaving captured hands in cloven oaks,—
Of leaving very souls within the buckle
Whence bodies struggled outward,—of supposing
That freemen may, like bondsmen, kneel and
truckle,
And then stand up as usual, without losing
An inch of stature.

Those whom she-wolves suckle
Will bite as wolves do in the grapple-closing
Of adverse interests. This, at last, is known,
(Thank Pius for the lesson) that albeit
Among the popedom's hundred heads of stone
Which blink down on you from the roof's retreat
In Siena's tiger-striped cathedral, Joan
And Borgia 'mid their fellows you may greet,
A harlot and a devil,—you will see
Not a man, still less angel, grandly set
With open soul to render man more free.
The fishers are still thinking of the net,
And, if not thinking of the hook too, we
Are counted somewhat deeply in their debt;
But that's a rare case—so by hook and crook
They take the advantage, agonising Christ
By rustier nails than those of Cedron's brook,
I' the people's body very cheaply priced,—
And quote high priesthood out of Holy book,
While buying death-fields with the sacrificed.

Priests, priests,—there's no such name!—God's own, except
Ye take most vainly. Through heaven's lifted gate
The priestly ephod in sole glory swept,
When Christ ascended, entered in, and sate
(With victor face sublimely overwept)
At Deity's right hand, to mediate
He alone, He forever. On his breast
The Urim and the Thummim, fed with fire
From the full Godhead, flicker with the unrest
Of human, pitiful heartbeats. Come up higher,
All-Christians! Levi's tribe is dispossest.
That solitary alb ye shall admire,

But not cast lots for. The last chrism, poured right,
Was on that Head, and poured for burial,
And not for domination in men's sight.
What *are* these churches? The old temple wall
Doth overlook them juggling with the sleight
Of surplice, candlestick, and altar-pall;
East church and west church, ay, north church and south,
Rome's church and England's,—let them all repent,
And make concordats 'twixt their soul and mouth,
Succeed St. Paul by working at the tent,
Become infallible guides by speaking truth,
And excommunicate their pride that bent
And cramped the souls of men.
Why, even here
Priestcraft burns out, the twinèd linen blazes;
Not, like asbestos, to grow white and clear,
But all to perish!—while the fire-smell raises
To life some swooning spirits, who, last year,
Lost breath and heart in these church-stifled places.
Why, almost, through this Pius, we believed
The priesthood could be an honest thing, he smiled
So saintly while our corn was being sheaved
For his own granaries. Showing now defiled
His hireling hands, a better help's achieved
Than if they blessed us shepherd-like and mild.
False doctrine, strangled by its own amen,
Dies in the throat of all this nation. Who
Will speak a pope's name, as they rise again?
What woman or what child will count him true?
What dreamer, praise him with the voice or pen?
What man fight for him?—Pius takes his due.

Record that gain, Mazzini!—Yes, but first

Set down thy people's faults;—set down the want
Of soul-conviction; set down aims dispersed,
And incoherent means, and valour scant
Because of scanty faith, and schisms accursed,
That wrench these brother-hearts from covenant
With freedom and each other. Set down this,
And this, and see to overcome it when
The seasons bring the fruits thou wilt not miss
If wary. Let no cry of patriot men
Distract thee from the stern analysis
Of masses who cry only! keep thy ken
Clear as thy soul is virtuous. Heroes' blood
Splashed up against thy noble brow in Rome,—
Let such not blind thee to an interlude
Which was not also holy, yet did come
'Twixt sacramental actions,—brotherhood,
Despised even there, and something of the doom
Of Remus, in the trenches. Listen now—
Rossi died silent near where Cæsar died.
He did not say, 'My Brutus, is it thou?'
But Italy unquestioned testified,
'*I* killed him!—*I* am Brutus.—I avow.'
At which the whole world's laugh of scorn replied,
'A poor maimed copy of Brutus!'
Too much like,
Indeed, to be so unlike! too unskilled
At Philippi and the honest battle-pike,
To be so skilful where a man is killed
Near Pompey's statue, and the daggers strike
At unawares i' the throat. Was thus fulfilled
An omen once of Michel Angelo?—
When Marcus Brutus he conceived complete,
And strove to hurl him out by blow on blow
Upon the marble, at Art's thunderheat,

Till haply (some pre-shadow rising slow,
Of what his Italy would fancy meet
To be called BRUTUS) straight his plastic hand
Fell back before his prophet-soul, and left
A fragment, a maimed Brutus,—but more grand
Than this, so named at Rome, was!
Let thy weft
Present one woof and warp, Mazzini!—stand
With no man hankering for a dagger's heft,—
No, not for Italy!—nor stand apart,
No, not for the republic!—from those pure
Brave men who hold the level of thy heart
In patriot truth, as lover and as doer,
Albeit they will not follow where thou art
As extreme theorist. Trust and distrust fewer;
And so bind strong and keep unstained the cause
Which (God's sign granted), war-trumps newly blown
Shall yet announciate to the world's applause.

But now, the world is busy; it has grown
A Fair-going world. Imperial England draws
The flowing ends of the earth, from Fez, Canton,
Delhi and Stockholm, Athens and Madrid,
The Russias and the vast Americas,
As if a queen drew in her robes amid
Her golden cincture,—isles, peninsulas,
Capes, continents, far inland countries hid
By jaspar-sands and hills of chrysopras,
All trailing in their splendours through the door
Of the gorgeous Crystal Palace. Every nation,
To every other nation strange of yore,
Gives face to face the civic salutation,
And holds up in a proud right hand before
That congress, the best work which she can fashion

By her best means. 'These corals, will you please
To match against your oaks? They grow as fast
Within my wilderness of purple seas.'—
'This diamond stared upon me as I passed
(As a live god's eye from a marble frieze)
Along a dark of diamonds. Is it classed?'—
'I wove these stuffs so subtly that the gold
Swims to the surface of the silk like cream,
And curdles to fair patterns. Ye behold!'—
'These delicatest muslins rather seem
Than be, you think? Nay, touch them and be bold,
Though such veiled Chakhi's face in Hafiz' dream.'—
'These carpets—you walk slow on them like kings,
Inaudible like spirits, while your foot
Dips deep in velvet roses and such things.'—
'Even Apollonius might commend this flute.*
The music, winding through the stops, upsprings
To make the player very rich! compute.'—
'Here's goblet-glass, to take in with your wine
The very sun its grapes were ripened under!
Drink light and juice together, and each fine.'—
'This model of a steamship moves your wonder?
You should behold it crushing down the brine,
Like a blind Jove, who feels his way with thunder.'—
'Here's sculpture! Ah, *we* live too! why not throw
Our life into our marbles? Art has place
For other artists after Angelo.'—
'I tried to paint out here a natural face;
For nature includes Raffael, as we know,

* Philostratus relates of Apollonius how he objected to the musical instrument of Linus the Rhodian, that it could not enrich or beautify. The history of music in our day, would satisfy the philosopher on one point at least.

Not Raffael nature. Will it help my case?'—
'Methinks you will not match this steel of ours!'—
'Nor you this porcelain! One might dream the clay
Retained in it the larvæ of the flowers,
They bud so, round the cup, the old spring way.'—
'Nor you these carven woods, where birds in bowers
With twisting snakes and climbing cupids, play.'

O Magi of the east and of the west,
Your incense, gold, and myrrh are excellent!—
What gifts for Christ, then, bring ye with the rest?
Your hands have worked well. Is your courage spent
In handwork only? Have you nothing best,
Which generous souls may perfect and present,
And He shall thank the givers for? no light
Of teaching, liberal nations, for the poor,
Who sit in darkness when it is not night?
No cure for wicked children? Christ,—no cure!
No help for women, sobbing out of sight
Because men made the laws? no brothel-lure
Burnt out by popular lightnings?—Hast thou found
No remedy, my England, for such woes?
No outlet, Austria, for the scourged and bound,
No entrance for the exiled? no repose,
Russia, for knouted Poles worked underground,
And gentle ladies bleached among the snows?—
No mercy for the slave, America?—
No hope for Rome, free France, chivalric France?—
Alas, great nations have great shames, I say.
No pity, O world, no tender utterance
Of benediction, and prayers stretched this way
For poor Italia, baffled by mischance?—
O gracious nations, give some ear to me!

You all go to your Fair, and I am one
Who at the roadside of humanity
Beseech your alms,—God's justice to be done.
So, prosper!

In the name of Italy,
Meantime, her patriot dead have benison
They only have done well,—and, what they did
Being perfect, it shall triumph. Let them slumber,
No king of Egypt in a pyramid
Is safer from oblivion, though he number
Full seventy cerements for a coverlid.
These Dead be seeds of life, and shall encumber
The sad heart of the land until it loose
The clammy clods and let out the spring growth
In beatific green through every bruise.
The tyrant should take heed to what he doth,
Since every victim-carrion turns to use,
And drives a chariot, like a god made wroth,
Against each piled injustice. Ay, the least,
Dead for Italia, not in vain has died,
Though many vainly, ere life's struggle ceased,
To mad dissimilar ends have swerved aside;
Each grave her nationality has pieced
By its own majestic breadth, and fortified
And pinned it deeper to the soil. Forlorn
Of thanks, be, therefore, no one of these graves!
Not Hers,—who, at her husband's side, in scorn,
Outfaced the whistling shot and hissing waves,
Until she felt her little babe unborn
Recoil within her, from the violent staves
And bloodhounds of the world,—at which, her life
Dropt inward from her eyes and followed it
Beyond the hunters. Garibaldi's wife

And child died so. And now, the sea-weeds fit
Her body like a proper shroud and coif,
And murmurously the ebbing waters grit
The little pebbles while she lies interred
In the sea-sand. Perhaps, ere dying thus,
She looked up in his face (which never stirred
From its clenched anguish) as to make excuse
For leaving him for his, if so she erred.
He well remembers that she could not choose.
A memorable grave! Another is
At Genoa. There, a king may fitly lie,
Who bursting that heroic heart of his
At lost Novara, that he could not die,
(Though thrice into the cannon's eyes for this
He plunged his shuddering steed, and felt the sky
Reel back between the fire shocks) stripped away
The ancestral ermine ere the smoke had cleared,
And, naked to the soul, that none might say
His kingship covered what was base and bleared
With treason, went out straight an exile, yea,
An exiled patriot. Let him be revered.

Yea, verily, Charles Albert has died well;
And if he lived not all so, as one spoke,
The sin pass softly with the passing bell.
For he was shriven, I think, in cannon-smoke,
And, taking off his crown, made visible
A hero's forehead. Shaking Austria's yoke
He shattered his own hand and heart. 'So best,'
His last words were upon his lonely bed,
'I do not end like popes and dukes at least—
Thank God for it.' And now that he is dead,
Admitting it is proved and manifest
That he was worthy, with a discrowned head,

To measure heights with patriots, let them stand
Beside the man in his Oporto shroud,
And each vouchsafe to take him by the hand,
And kiss him on the cheek, and say aloud,—
'Thou, too, hast suffered for our native land!
'My brother, thou art one of us! be proud.'

Still, graves, when Italy is talked upon.
Still, still, the patriot's tomb, the stranger's hate.
Still Niobe! still fainting in the sun,
By whose most dazzling arrows violate
Her beauteous offspring perished! has she won
Nothing but garlands for the graves, from Fate?
Nothing but death-songs?—Yes, be it understood
Life throbs in noble Piedmont! while the feet
Of Rome's clay image, dabbled soft in blood,
Grow flat with dissolution, and, as meet,
Will soon be shovelled off like other mud,
To leave the passage free in church and street.
And I, who first took hope up in this song,
Because a child was singing one . . . behold,
The hope and omen were not, haply, wrong!
Poets are soothsayers still, like those of old
Who studied flights of doves,—and creatures young
And tender, mighty meanings, may unfold.

The sun strikes, through the windows, up the floor;
Stand out in it, my own young Florentine,
Not two years old, and let me see thee more!
It grows along thy amber curls, to shine
Brighter than elsewhere. Now, look straight before.

And fix thy brave blue English eyes on mine.
And from my soul, which fronts the future so,
With unabashed and unabated gaze,
Teach me to hope for, what the angels know
When they smile clear as thou dost. Down God's ways
With just alighted feet, between the snow
And snowdrops, where a little lamb may graze,
Thou hast no fear, my lamb, about the road,
Albeit in our vain-glory we assume
That, less than we have, thou hast learnt of God.
Stand out, my blue-eyed prophet!—thou, to whom
The earliest world-day light that ever flowed,
Through Casa Guidi windows, chanced to come!
Now shake the glittering nimbus of thy hair,
And be God's witness that the elemental
New springs of life are gushing everywhere
To cleanse the water-courses, and prevent all
Concrete obstructions which infest the air!
That earth's alive, and gentle or ungentle
Motions within her, signify but growth!—
The ground swells greenest o'er the labouring moles.

Howe'er the uneasy world is vexed and wroth,
Young children, lifted high on parent souls,
Look round them with a smile upon the mouth,
And take for music every bell that tolls;
(Who said we should be better if like these?)
But *we* sit murmuring for the future though
Posterity is smiling on our knees,
Convicting us of folly. Let us go—
We will trust God. The blank interstices
Men take for ruins, He will build into
With pillared marbles rare, or knit across

With generous arches, till the fane's complete.
This world has no perdition, if some loss.

Such cheer I gather from thy smiling, Sweet!
The self-same cherub-faces which emboss
The Vail, lean inward to the Mercy-seat.

THE SWORD OF CASTRUCCIO CASTRUCANI.

'Questa e per me.'—Victor Emanuel.

I.

When Victor Emanuel, the King,
Went down to his Lucca that day,
The people, each vaunting the thing
As he gave it, gave all things away
In a burst of fierce gratitude, say,
As they tore out their hearts for the King.

II.

Gave the green forest-walk on the wall,
With the Apennine blue through the trees;
Gave palaces, churches, and all
The great pictures which burn out of these;
But the eyes of the King seemed to freeze
As he glanced upon ceiling and wall.

III.

'Good,' said the King as he past.
Was he cold to the arts? or else coy
To possession? or crossed at the last,

Whispered some, by the vote in Savoy?
Shout!—love him enough for his joy!
'Good,' said the King as he past.

IV.

He, travelling the whole day through flowers
And protesting amenities, found,
At Pistoia, betwixt the two showers
Of red roses, 'the Orphans' (renowned
As the heirs of Puccini) who wound
With a sword through the crowd and the flowers.

V.

''Tis the sword of Castruccio, O King!
In old strife of intestinal hate
Very famous. Accept what we bring,
We, who cannot be sons by our fate,
Rendered citizens by thee of late
And endowed with a country and King.

VI.

'Read:—Puccini has willed that this sword
(Which once made in an ignorant feud
Many orphans) remain in our ward
Till some patriot its pure civic blood
Wipe away in the foe's and make good,
In delivering the land by the sword.'

VII.

Then the King exclaimed, 'This is for *me!*'
And he dashed out his sword on the hilt,
While his blue eye shot fire openly
And his heart overboiled till it spilt
A hot prayer,—'God, the rest as thou wilt!
But grant me this!—this is for *me!*'

VIII.

O Victor Emanuel, the King,
The sword be for *thee*, and the deed,
And nought for the alien, next spring,
Nought for Hapsburg and Bourbon agreed;
But, for us, a great Italy freed,
With a hero to head us, . . our King!

SUMMING UP IN ITALY.

(INSCRIBED TO INTELLIGENT PUBLICS OUT OF IT.)

I.

OBSERVE how it will be at last,
When our Italy stands at full stature,
A year ago tied down so fast
That the cord cut the quick of her nature!
You'll honor the deed and its scope,
Then, in logical sequence upon it,
Will use up the remnants of rope
By hanging the men who have done it.

II.

The speech in the Commons which hits you
A sketch off, how dungeons must feel,—
The official dispatch, which commits you
From stamping out groans with your heel,—
Suggestions in journal or book for
Good efforts,—are praised . . . as is meet;
But what in this world can men look for,
Who only achieve and complete?

III.

True, you've praise for the fireman, who sets his
Brave face to the axe of the flame,
Disappears in the smoke, and then fetches
A babe down, or idiot that's lame,—
For the boor even, who rescues through pity
A sheep from the brute who would kick it:
But saviours of nations!—'tis pretty,
And doubtful: they *may* be so wicked!

IV.

Azeglio, Farini, Mamiani,
Ricasoli,—doubt by the dozen!—here's
Pepoli too, and Cipriani,
Imperial cousins and cogeners;
Arese, Laiatico, courtly
Of manners, if stringent of mouth.
Garibaldi—we'll come to him shortly,
(As soon as he ends in the south.)

V.

Napoleon,—as strong as ten armies,
Corrupt as seven devils,—a fact
You accede to, then seek where the harm is
Drained off from the man to his act,
And find . . . a free nation. Suppose
Some hell-brood in Eden's sweet greenery,
Convoked for creating . . . a rose!—
Would it suit the infernal machinery?

VI.

Cavour,—to the despot's desire,
Who his own thought so craftily marries,
What is he but just a thin wire
For conducting the lightning from Paris?

Yes, write down the two as compeers,
Confessing (you would not permit a lie)
He bore up his Piedmont ten years
Till she suddenly smiled and was Italy.

VII.

And the King, with that 'stain on his 'scutcheon'*...
Savoy . . . as the calumny runs!
If it be not his blood,—with his clutch on
The sword, and his face to the guns.
O first where the battle-storm gathers,
O loyal of heart on the throne,
Let those keep the 'graves of their fathers,'
Who quail, in a nerve, from their own!

VIII.

For *thee;*—through the dim Hades-portal
The dream of a voice,—'Blessed thou
Who hast made all thy race twice immortal!
No need of the sepulchres now!—
Left to Bourbons and Hapsburgs, who fester
Above-ground with worm-eaten souls,
While the ghost of some poor feudal jester
Before them strews treaties in holes.'

IX.

—But hush!—am I dreaming a poem
Of Hades, heaven, justice?—not I.
I began too far off, in my proem,
With what men believe and deny.
And, on earth, whatsoever the meed is,
(To sum up as thoughtful reviewers,)
The moral of every great deed is
The virtue of slandering the doers.

* See Diplomatical Correspondence.

GARIBALDI.

I.

He bent his head upon his breast
Wherein his lion-heart lay sick:—
'Perhaps we are not ill-repaid—
Perhaps this is not a true test;
Perhaps that was not a foul trick;
Perhaps none wronged, and none betrayed.

II.

'Perhaps the people's vote which here
United, there may disunite,
And both be lawful as they think.
Perhaps a patriot statesman, dear
For chartering nations, can with right
Disfranchise those who hold the ink.

III.

'Perhaps men's wisdom is not craft;
Men's greatness, not a selfish greed;
Men's justice, not the safer side.
Perhaps even women when they laughed,
Wept, thanked us that the land was freed,
Not wholly (though they kissed us) lied.

IV.

'Perhaps no more than this we meant,
When up at Austria's guns we flew
And spiked them with a cry apiece,
'*Italia!*'—Yet a dream was sent..
The little house my father knew,
The olives and the palms of Nice.

V.

He paused, and drew his sword out slow,—
Then pored upon the blade intent
As if to read some written thing;
While many murmured, 'He will go
In that despairing sentiment
And break his sword before the King.'

VI.

He poring still upon the blade
His large lid quivered, something fell.—
'Perhaps,' he said, 'I was not born
With such fine brains to treat and trade,—
And if a woman knew it well
Her falsehood only meant her scorn.

VII.

'Yet through Varese's cannon-smoke
My eye saw clear: men feared this man
At Como, where this sword could deal
Death's protocol at every stroke.
And now . . the drop there, scarcely can
Impair the keenness of the steel.

VIII.

'So man and sword may have their use:
And if the soil beneath my foot
In valour's act is forfeited,
I'll strike the harder, take my dues
Out nobler, and the loss confute
From ampler heavens above my head.

IX.

'My King, King Victor, I am thine!
So much Nice-dust as what I am
(To make our Italy) must cleave.
Forgive that.'—Forward with a sign
He went.—You've seen the telegram?
Palermo's taken, we believe.

A FORCED RECRUIT AT SOLFERINO.

I.

In the ranks of the Austrian you found him;
He died with his face to you all:
Yet bury him here where around him
You honour your bravest that fall.

II.

Venetian, fair-featured, and slender,
He lies shot to death in his youth,
With a smile on his lips, over-tender
For any mere soldier's dead mouth.

III.

No stranger, and yet not a traitor!
Though alien the cloth on his breast,
Underneath it how seldom a greater
Young heart, has a shot sent to rest!

IV.

By your enemy tortured and goaded
To march with them, stand in their file,
His musket (see!) never was loaded,—
He facing your guns with that smile.

V.

As orphans yearn on to their mothers,
He yearned to your patriot bands,—
'Let me die for our Italy, brothers,
If not in your ranks, by your hands!

VI.

'Aim straightly, fire steadily; spare me
A ball in the body, which may
Deliver my heart here and tear me
This badge of the Austrian away.'

VII.

So thought he, so died he this morning.
What then? many others have died.
Ay,—but easy for men to die scorning
The death-stroke, who fought side by side;

VIII.

One tricolor floating above them;
Struck down mid triumphant acclaims
Of an Italy rescued to love them
And blazon the brass with their names.

IX.

But he,—without witness or honour,
Mixed, shamed in his country's regard,
With the tyrants who march in upon her,—
Died faithful and passive: 'twas hard.

X.

'Twas sublime. In a cruel restriction
Cut off from the guerdon of sons,
With most filial obedience, conviction,
His soul kissed the lips of her guns.

XI.

That moves you? nay, grudge not to show it
While digging a grave for him here.
The others who died, says your poet,
Have glory: let *him* have a tear.

DE PROFUNDIS.

I.

The face which, duly as the sun,
Rose up for me with life begun,
To mark all bright hours of the day
With daily love, is dimmed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

II.

The tongue which, like a stream, could run
Smooth music from the roughest stone,
And every morning with 'Good-day'
Made each day good, is hushed away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

III.

The heart which, like a staff, was one
For mine to lean and rest upon;
The strongest on the longest day
With stedfast love, is caught away,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

IV.

And cold before my summer's done,
And deaf in Nature's general tune,
And fallen too low for special fear,
And here, with hope no longer here,—
While the tears drop, my days go on.

V.

The world goes whispering to its own,
'This anguish pierces to the bone.'
And tender friends go sighing round,
'What love can ever cure this wound?'
My days go on, my days go on.

VI.

The past rolls forward on the sun
And makes all night. O dreams begun,
Not to be ended! Ended bliss!
And life, that will not end in this!
My days go on, my days go on.

VII.

Breath freezes on my lips to moan:
As one alone, once not alone,
I sit and knock at Nature's door,
Heart-bare, heart-hungry, very poor,
Whose desolated days go on.

VIII.

I knock and cry, . . Undone, undone!
Is there no help, no comfort . . none?
No gleaning in the wide wheat-plains
Where others drive their loaded wains?
My vacant days go on, go on.

IX.

This Nature, though the snows be down,
Thinks kindly of the bird of June.
The little red hip on the tree
Is ripe for such. What is for me,
Whose days so winterly go on?

X.

No bird am I to sing in June,
And dare not ask an equal boon.
Good nests and berries red are Nature's
To give away to better creatures,—
And yet my days go on, go on.

XI.

I ask less kindness to be done,—
Only to loose these pilgrim-shoon
(Too early worn and grimed) with sweet
Cool deathly touch to these tired feet,
Till days go out which now go on.

XII.

Only to lift the turf unmown
From off the earth where it has grown,
Some cubit-space, and say 'Behold
Creep in, poor Heart, beneath that fold,
Forgetting how the days go on.'

XIII.

What harm would *that* do? Green anon
The sward would quicken, overshone
By skies as blue; and crickets might
Have leave to chirp there day and night
While my new rest went on, went on.

XIV.

From gracious Nature have I won
Such liberal bounty? May I run
So, lizard-like, within her side,
And there be safe, who now am tried
By days that painfully go on?

XV.

—A Voice reproves me thereupon,
More sweet than Nature's, when the drone
Of bees is sweetest, and more deep,
Than when the rivers overleap
The shuddering pines, and thunder on.

XVI.

God's Voice, not Nature's—night and noon
He sits upon the great white throne
And listens for the creatures' praise.
What babble we of days and days?
The Dayspring He, whose days go on.

XVII.

He reigns above, he reigns alone:
Systems burn out and leave His throne:
Fair mists of seraphs melt and fall
Around Him, changeless amid all!—
Ancient of days, whose days go on!

XVIII.

He reigns below, He reigns alone,—
And having life in love foregone
Beneath the crown of sovran thorns,
He reigns the jealous God. Who mourns
Or rules with HIM, while days go on?

XIX.

By anguish which made pale the sun,
I hear him charge his saints that none
Among the creatures anywhere
Blaspheme against him with despair,
However darkly days go on.

XX.

—Take from my head the thorn-wreath brown!
No mortal grief deserves that crown.
O supreme Love, chief misery,
The sharp regalia are for *Thee*
Whose days eternally go on!

XXI.

For us, . . whatever's undergone,
Thou knowest, willest what is done.
Grief may be joy misunderstood:
Only the Good discerns the good.
I trust thee while my days go on.

XXII.

Whatever's lost, it first was won:
We will not struggle nor impugn.
Perhaps the cup was broken here
That Heaven's new wine might show more clear.
I praise Thee while my days go on!

XXIII.

I praise Thee while my days go on;
I love Thee while my days go on!
Through dark and dearth, through fire and frost,
With emptied arms and treasure lost
I thank Thee while my days go on!

XXIV.

And, having in thy life-depth thrown
Being and suffering, (which are one,)
As a child drops some pebble small
Down some deep well and hears it fall
Smiling . . . so ¶! THY DAYS GO ON!

PARTING LOVERS.

SIENNA.

I.

I LOVE thee, love thee, Giulio!
Some call me cold, and some demure,
And if thou hast ever guessed that so
I love thee . . . well;—the proof was poor,
And no one could be sure.

II.

Before thy song (with shifted rhymes
To suit my name) did I undo
The persian? If it moved sometimes,
Thou hast not seen a hand push through
A flower or two.

III.

My mother listening to my sleep
Heard nothing but a sigh at night,—
The short sigh rippling on the deep,—
When hearts run out of breath and sight
Of men, to God's clear light.

IV.

When others named thee. . . thought thy brows
Were straight, thy smile was tender, . . 'Here
He comes between the vineyard-rows!'—
I said not 'Ay,'—nor waited, Dear,
To feel thee step too near.

V.

I left such things to bolder girls,
Olivia or Clotilda. Nay,
When that Clotilda through her curls
Held both thine eyes in hers one day,
I marvelled, let me say.

VI.

I could not try the woman's trick:
Between us straightway fell the blush
Which kept me separate, blind, and sick.
A wind came with thee in a flush,
As blown through Horeb's bush.

VII.

But now that Italy invokes
Her young men to go forth and chase
The foe or perish,—nothing chokes
My voice, or drives me from the place:
I look thee in the face.

VIII.

I love thee! it is understood,
Confest: I do not shrink or start:
No blushes: all my body's blood
Has gone to greaten this poor heart,
That, loving, we may part.

IX.

Our Italy invokes the youth
To die if need be. Still there's room,
Though earth is strained with dead, in truth.
Since twice the lilies were in bloom
They have not grudged a tomb.

X.

And many a plighted maid and wife
And mother, who can say since then
'My country,' cannot say through life
'My son,' 'my spouse,' 'my flower of men,'
And not weep dumb again.

XI.

Heroic males the country bears,
But daughters give up more than sons.
Flags wave, drums beat, and unawares
You flash your souls out with the guns
And take your Heaven at once!

XII.

But *we*,—we empty heart and home
Of life's life, love! we bear to think
You're gone, . . to feel you may not come, . .
To hear the door-latch stir and clink
Yet no more you, . . nor sink.

XIII.

Dear God! when Italy is one
And perfected from bound to bound, . .
Suppose (for my share) earth's undone
By one grave in't! as one small wound
May kill a man, 'tis found!

XIV.

What then? If love's delight must end,
At least we'll clear its truth from flaws.
I love thee, love thee, sweetest friend!
Now take my sweetest without pause,
To help the nation's cause.

XV.

And thus of noble Italy
We'll both be worthy. Let her show
The future how we made her free,
Not sparing life, nor Giulio,
Nor this . . this heart-break. Go!

MOTHER AND POET.

(TURIN—AFTER NEWS FROM GAETA. 1861.)

I.

Dead! one of them shot by the sea in the east,
And one of them shot in the west by the sea.
Dead! both my boys! When you sit at the feast
And are wanting a great song for Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

II.

Yet I was a poetess only last year,
And good at my art for a woman, men said.
But *this* woman, *this*, who is agonized here,
The east sea and west sea rhyme on in her head
For ever instead.

III.

What art can a woman be good at? Oh, vain!
What art *is* she good at, but hurting her breast
With the milk-teeth of babes, and a smile at the pain?
Ah, boys, how you hurt! you were strong as you pressed,
And *I* proud, by that test.

IV.

What art's for a woman? To hold on her knees
Both darlings! to feel all their arms round her throat
Cling, strangle a little! to sew by degrees
And 'broider the long-clothes and neat little coat!
To dream and to dote.

V.

To teach them . . It stings there. *I* made them indeed
Speak plain the word 'country.' *I* taught them no doubt
That a country's a thing men should die for at need.
I prated of liberty, rights, and about
The tyrant turned out.

VI.

And when their eyes flashed . . . O my beautiful eyes! . .
I exulted! nay, let them go forth at the wheels
Of the guns, and denied not.—But then the surprise,
When one sits quite alone!—Then one weeps, then one kneels!
—God! how the house feels!

VII.

At first happy news came, in gay letters moiled
With my kisses, of camp-life and glory, and how
They both loved me, and soon, coming home to be spoiled,
In return would fan off every fly from my brow
With their green laurel-bough.

VIII.

Then was triumph at Turin. 'Ancona was free!'
And some one came out of the cheers in the street
With a face pale as stone, to say something to me.
—My Guido was dead!—I fell down at his feet,
While they cheered in the street.

IX.

I bore it:—friends soothed me: my grief looked sublime
As the ransom of Italy. One boy remained
To be leant on and walked with, recalling the time
When the first grew immortal, while both of us strained
To the height he had gained.

X.

And letters still came,—shorter, sadder, more strong,
Writ now but in one hand. 'I was not to faint.
'One loved me for two . . would be with me ere long:
'And 'Viva Italia' *he* died for, our saint,
'Who forbids our complaint.'

XI.

My Nanni would add 'he was safe, and aware
'Of a presence that turned off the balls . . was imprest
'It was Guido himself, who knew what I could bear,
'And how 'twas impossible, quite dispossessed,
'To live on for the rest.'

XII.

On which without pause up the telegraph line
Swept smoothly the next news from Gaeta:—
Shot.
Tell his mother. Ah, ah,—'his,' 'their' mother: not 'mine.'
No voice says '*my* mother' again to me. What!
You think Guido forgot?

XIII.

Are souls straight so happy that, dizzy with Heaven,
They drop earth's affections, conceive not of woe?
I think not. Themselves were too lately forgiven
Through that Love and Sorrow which reconciled so
The Above and Below.

XIV.

O Christ of the seven wounds, who look'dst through the dark
To the face of Thy mother! consider, I pray,
How we common mothers stand desolate, mark,
Whose sons, not being Christs, die with eyes turned away,
And no last word to say!

XV.

Both boys dead! but that's out of nature. We all
Have been patriots, yet each house must always keep one.
'Twere imbecile, hewing out roads to a wall.
And, when Italy's made, for what end is it done
If we have not a son?

XVI.

Ah, ah, ah! when Gaeta's taken, what then?
When the fair wicked queen sits no more at her sport
Of the fire-balls of death crashing souls out of men?
When your guns of Cavalli with final retort
Have cut the game short,—

XVII.

When Venice and Rome keep their new jubilee,
When your flag takes all heaven for its white, green, and red,
When *you* have your country from mountain to sea,
When King Victor has Italy's crown on his head,
(And I have my Dead,)

XVIII.

What then? Do not mock me. Ah, ring your bells low,
And burn your lights faintly!—*My* country is there,
Above the star pricked by the last peak of snow.
My Italy's there,—with my brave civic Pair,
To disfranchise despair.

XIX.

Forgive me. Some women bear children in strength,
And bite back the cry of their pain in self-scorn.
But the birth-pangs of nations will wring us at length
Into wail such as this!—and we sit on forlorn
When the man-child is born.

XX.

Dead!—one of them shot by the sea in the west,
And one of them shot in the east by the sea!
Both! both my boys!—If in keeping the feast
You want a great song for your Italy free,
Let none look at *me!*

ONLY A CURL.

I.

Friends of faces unknown and a land
Unvisited over the sea,
Who tell me how lonely you stand,
With a single gold curl in the hand
Held up to be looked at by me!—

II.

While you ask me to ponder and say
What a father and mother can do,
With the bright yellow locks put away
Out of reach, beyond kiss, in the clay,
Where the violets press nearer than you:—

III.

Shall I speak like a poet, or run
Into weak woman's tears for relief?
Oh, children! I never lost one.
But my arm's round my own little son,
And Love knows the secret of Grief.

IV.

And I feel what it must be and is
When God draws a new angel so
Through the house of a man up to His,
With a murmur of music you miss,
And a rapture of light you forego.

V.

How you think, staring on at the door
Where the face of your angel flashed in,
That its brightness, familiar before,
Burns off from you ever the more
For the dark of your sorrow and sin.

VI.

'God lent him and takes him,' you sigh . .
—Nay, there let me break with your pain
God's generous in giving, say I,
And the thing which He gives, I deny
That He ever can take back again.

VII.

He gives what he gives. I appeal
To all who bear babes! In the hour
When the vail of the body we feel
Rent round us, while torments reveal
The motherhood's advent in power,

VIII.

And the babe cries,—have all of us known
By apocalypse (God being there,
Full in nature!) the child is *our own*,—
Life of life, love of love, moan of moan,
Through all changes, all times, everywhere.

IX.

He's ours and for ever. Believe,
O father!—O mother, look back
To the first love's assurance! To give
Means, with God, not to tempt or deceive
With a cup thrust in Benjamin's sack.

X.

He gives what he gives: be content.
He resumes nothing given,—be sure.
God lend?—where the usurers lent
In His temple, indignant he went
And scourged away all those impure.

XI.

He lends not, but gives to the end,
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That He draws back a gift, comprehend
'Tis to add to it rather . . amend,
And finish it up to your dream,—

XII.

Or keep . . as a mother may toys
Too costly, though given by herself,
Till the room shall be stiller from noise,
And the children more fit for such joys,
Kept over their heads on the shelf.

XIII.

So look up, friends! You who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need
Be more earnest than others are, speed
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.

XIV.

You know how one angel smiles there.
Then, courage! 'Tis easy for you
To be drawn by a single gold hair
Of that curl, from earth's storm and despair
To the safe place above us. Adieu!

LITTLE MATTIE.

I.

Dead! Thirteen a month ago!
Short and narrow her life's walk.
Lover's love she could not know
Even by a dream or talk:
Too young to be glad of youth;
Missing honour, labour, rest,
And the warmth of a babe's mouth
At the blossom of her breast.
Must you pity her for this,
And for all the loss it is—
You, her mother with wet face,
Having had all in your case?

II.

Just so young but yesternight,
Now she is as old as death.
Meek, obedient in your sight,
Gentle to a beck or breath
Only on last Monday! yours,
Answering you like silver bells
Lightly touched! an hour matures:
You can teach her nothing else.
She has seen the mystery hid
Under Egypt's pyramid.
By those eyelids pale and close
Now she knows what Rhamses knows.

III.

Cross her quiet hands, and smooth
Down her patient locks of silk,

Cold and passive as in truth
  You your fingers in spilt milk
Drew along a marble floor;
  But her lips you cannot wring
Into saying a word more,
  'Yes' or 'no,' or such a thing.
Though you call and beg and wreak
Half your soul out in a shriek,
She will lie there in default
And most innocent revolt.

IV.

Ay, and if she spoke, may be
  She would answer like the Son,
'What is now 'twixt thee and me?'
  Dreadful answer! better none.
Yours on Monday, God's to-day!
  Yours, your child, your blood, your heart,
Called . . . you called her, did you say,
  'Little Mattie' for your part?
Now already it sounds strange,
And you wonder, in this change,
What He calls His angel-creature,
Higher up than you can reach her.

V.

'Twas a green and easy world
  As she took it! room to play,
(Though one's hair might get uncurled
  At the far end of the day.)
What she suffered she shook off
  In the sunshine; what she sinned
She could pray on high enough
  To keep safe above the wind.

If reproved by God or you,
'Twas to better her she knew;
And, if crossed, she gathered still
'Twas to cross out something ill.

VI.

You, you had the right, you thought,
To survey her with sweet scorn,
Poor gay child, who had not caught
Yet the octave-stretch forlorn
Of your larger wisdom! Nay,
Now your places are changed so,
In that same superior way
She regards you dull and low
As you did herself exempt
From life's sorrows. Grand contempt
Of the spirits risen awhile,
Who look back with such a smile!

VII.

There's the sting of't. That, I think,
Hurts the most, a thousandfold!
To feel sudden, at a wink,
Some dear child we used to scold,
Praise, love both ways, kiss and tease,
Teach and tumble as our own,
All its curls about our knees,
Rise up suddenly full-grown.
Who could wonder such a sight
Made a woman mad outright?
—— Show me Michael with the sword
Rather than such angels, Lord!

THE KING'S GIFT.

CAPRERA.

I.

Teresa, ah, Teresita!
Now what has the messenger brought her,
Our Garibaldi's young daughter,
To make her stop short in her singing?
Will she not once more repeat a
Verse from that hymn of our hero's,
Setting the souls of us ringing?
Break off the song where the tear rose?
Ah, Teresita!

II.

A young thing, mark, is Teresa.
Her eyes have caught fire, to be sure, in
That necklace of jewels from Turin,
Till blind their regard to us men is.
But still she remembers to raise a
Shy look to her father, and note,
... 'Could she sing on as well about Venice,
Yet wear such a flame at her throat?
Decide for Teresa.'

III.

Teresa, ah, Teresita!
His right hand has passed on her head.
'Accept it, my daughter,' he said,
'Ay, wear it, true child of thy mother,

Then sing, till all start to their feet, a
New verse even bolder and freer!
King Victor's no king like another
But verily noble as *we* are,
Child, Teresita!'

A VIEW ACROSS THE ROMAN CAMPAGNA.
1861.

I.

Over the dumb campagna-sea,
Out in the offing through mist and rain,
St. Peter's church heaves silently
Like a mighty ship in pain,
Facing the tempest with struggle and strain.

II.

Motionless waifs of ruined towers,
Soundless breakers of desolate land!
The sullen surf of the mist devours
That mountain-range upon either hand,
Eaten away from its outline grand.

III.

And over the dumb campagna-sea
Where the ship of the Church heaves on to wreck,
Alone and silent as God must be
The Christ walks!—Ay, but Peter's neck
Is stiff to turn on the foundering deck.

IV.

Peter, Peter, if such be thy name,
Now leave the ship for another to steer,
And proving thy faith evermore the same
Come forth, tread out through the dark and drear,
Since He who walks on the sea is here!

V.

Peter, Peter!—he does not speak—
He is not as rash as in old Galilee.
Safer a ship though it toss and leak,
Than a reeling foot on a rolling sea!
—And he's got to be round in the girth, thinks he.

VI.

Peter, Peter!—he does not stir—
His nets are heavy with silver fish:
He reckons his gains, and is keen to infer,
..'The broil on the shore, if the Lord should wish,—
But the sturgeon goes to the Cæsar's dish.'

VII.

Peter, Peter, thou fisher of men,
Fisher of fish wouldst thou live instead,—
Haggling for pence with the other Ten,
Cheating the market at so much a head,
Griping the Bag of the traitor Dead?

VIII.

At the triple crow of the Gallic cock
Thou weep'st not, thou, though thine eyes be dazed:
What bird comes next in the tempest shock?
..Vultures! See,—as when Romulus gazed,—
To inaugurate ROME for a world amazed!

THE NORTH AND THE SOUTH.

(HANS CHRISTIAN ANDERSEN'S VISIT TO ITALY MAY, 1861.)

I.

"Now give us lands where the olives grow,"
Cried the North to the South,
"Where the sun with a golden mouth can blow
Blue bubbles of grapes down a vineyard-row!"
Cried the North to the South.

"Now give us men from the sunless plain,"
Cried the South to the North,
"By need of work in the snow and the rain
Made strong, and brave by familiar pain!"
Cried the South to the North.

II.

"Give lucider hills and intenser seas,"
Said the North to the South,
"Since ever by symbols and bright degrees
Art, childlike, climbs to the dear Lord's knees"
Said the North to the South.

"Give strenuous souls for belief and prayer,"
Said the South to the North,
"That stand in the dark on the lowest stair,
While affirming of God, 'He is certainly *there*,'"
Said the South to the North.

III.

"Yet oh, for the skies that are softer and higher!"
Sighed the North to the South,
"—For the flowers that blaze, and the trees that aspire,
And the insects made of a song or a fire!"
Sighed the North to the South.

"And oh, for a seer, to discern the same!"
Sighed the South to the North,
"—For a poet's tongue of baptismal flame,
To call the tree and the flower by its name!"
Sighed the South to the North.

IV.

The North sent therefore a man of men
As a grace to the South,—
And thus to Rome came Andersen:
"—*Alas, but must you take him again?*"
Said the South to the North.